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PREPARE FOR BATTLE,
THEY CHOOSE THE *V3* HELMET.**



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April

2006

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RIDER



Comment

'IT WAS the best of times, it was the worst of times...' Okay, so the opening sentence of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* was written to describe the period of the French Revolution but there are some uncanny parallels that can be drawn with the current state of off-road sport.

This stage of the year is always the best of times – and that's especially true of the '06 season. This issue of DBR will be winging its way to the presses two days before the Hawkstone International MX (which is why our coverage from the event will be featured in next month's mag) but, even with deadline hanging over us, at the time of writing the whole office is buzzing with excitement.

And that's just one event! The prospect of a whole year of Stefan Everts in his retirement campaign fighting it out with Josh Coppins, Mickael Pichon and Seb Tortelli promises to make 2006 a vintage year for motocross.

And that's just one class! MX2 should be just as good with Tony Cairoli aiming to defend his title from KTM's dashing duo of Tyla Rattray and Marc De Reuver. And I better not forget Billy MacKenzie – the Scot proved last year that on his day there's no-one faster in MX2, he just needs to have 'his day' a little more often.

And that's just one sport! The same day as the GPs kick off in Zolder the WTC gets under way in Spain. After two years without a world title Dougie Lampkin is looking to take his eighth outdoor crown. With the four-stroke HRC Montesa now having a full year of WTC development under its belt – and if he can avoid the horror crashes that ended his championship challenge in '05 – Dougie starts the outdoor season with a great chance of overtaking Jordi Tarres in the all-time win list.

Over in the world of enduros we've got Manx man mountain David Knight primed to do the business in the WEC. Knighter dominated last year – missing out on just one win in the series – and his 2006 campaign has started out in typically forceful fashion with a string of victories.

See what I mean about this being the best of times? Anticipation is a beautiful thing...

Of course there is a downside and that is the increasing threat to the sports we love because of environmental concerns. Finding places to ride – legally – is getting tougher and tougher and one of the biggest problems centres around the noise the 'new' more environmentally-friendly four-strokes put out. I'm sure the irony of switching to four-poppers to bring emissions down only for them to cause a different sort of pollution isn't lost on most readers.

But there is a glimmer of hope. Our chief bike tester Tony D Marshall is freshly back from Sicily where he rode the V-twin Aprilia enduro and supermoto machines. Tony reckons the bikes are super-quiet and, thanks to the fuel injection system, should be more efficient as well which can only be a good thing. And there could be an even simpler solution...

Sutty was watching his mate Eddie Holmes racing his CRF250X at Culham and reckons the enduro silencer made it sound like a lawn mower around the track without sapping all the power. So there you have it, a quick and easy solution to noise problems – just make everyone run an enduro silencer. This way bikes are quieter and it's a level playing field.

All you need to do then is hammer home to all the numpties out there who normally wouldn't bother the importance of keeping them properly packed. Which presents a whole different set of problems...

Sean

See Billy Mac in action at Matterley Basin on June 17/18



GP SHUFFLE!

FIM calendar rejig prompts date change for British Grand Prix

A RESHUFFLE of the world MX championship calendar has resulted in the British GP – originally scheduled for Matterley Basin on June 10/11 – being moved back a week to June 17/18.

The move comes after the Bulgarian GP was confirmed for June 3/4 which would have forced the GP circus to travel from Eastern Europe to Britain and then back to Italy for the round at Montevarchi in the space of a fortnight. Obviously this threw up a logistical – and very expensive – nightmare for teams.

Despite the huge amount of pre-event publicity that has already gone out giving the original date, Brit GP co-ordinator Steve Dixon is still positive.

"We are full steam ahead with the plans for the grand prix and the date change was not too much hassle at all," says Steve who went online to consult MX fans before agreeing to the switch. "We're getting good publicity in the Winchester

area which is very important and it's been well received in the national MX media as well."

The date switch initially threw up a clash with the BYMX championship at Pontrilas but a hasty rejig has moved the youth series forward to the June 10/11 slot vacated by the British GP.

"Without the switch they could have potentially lost at least 1000 spectators as it's not just the riders but their family and friends who wouldn't have gone," reckons our very own youth editor Ray Chuss. "And at the end of the day some of these kids could be racing the British GP a few years down the line so it's good for them to be able to go and see what it's all about."

For advance ticket offers call the event hotline on 0845 456 6536 and for more details visit the website at www.britmxgrandprix.com

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BLAST OFF!

Brit MX series is ready to rip

JUST ONE week after the awesome action at the Hawkstone Park pre-season international the Maxxis British motocross championship kicks off at Caddes Hill, Lyng, in the beautiful county of Norfolk on March 12.

This year's British series looks like being one of the strongest domestic championships anywhere in the world as 20 GP contenders – a handful of which have won events at the very highest level – will roll into town for round one of the eight-round series. The battle for the podium places promises to be a pleasing one as wild cards Tanel Leok and Marc De Reuver will take on the series' regulars.

In the MX1 division it's defending champ Josh Coppins who must surely start as favourite although he'll have to work hard to beat off championship challengers James Noble, Ken De Dycker, Stephen Sword, Neville Bradshaw, Jussi Vehvilainen and Gordon Crockard.

And the MX2 class is also packed full of talent. East Anglia's Carl Nunn comes into round one sporting the big fat #1 plate he won in last year's championship battle and he's very keen to retain the title. But Nunn will be right up against it as Billy MacKenzie is looking to go one better in '06 and

Brad Anderson, Tommy Searle, Wayne Smith and Dutchman De Reuver will all surely be chasing hard in the two points paying motos.

With MX2 qualifying kicking off at 9:30 and the first race going to the line at 12:30 it's worth getting to Caddes Hill nice and early so you can soak up all the atmosphere and excitement of the eagerly awaited opening round of the series.

Caddes Hill can be found situated just three miles north of the A47 next to the picturesque village of Lyng. The track will be well signposted from the A47 Norwich to Kings Lynn road and also the A1067 Norwich to Fakenham road. Entrance costs £20 for grown-ups with accompanied children under 14 getting in for free.

And just four weeks later on April 9 the championship heads south to the awesome Canada Heights venue in Swanley, Kent, for round two. The sandy hillside circuit normally hosts the opening round of the series and is perennially the best attended event of the season due to its geographical location just to the east of London and right on the doorstep of the M25 and M20.

For more details check out the official championship website – www.mxgb.info



Josh Coppins starts favourite to make it a hat-trick of MX1 crowns



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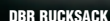
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**Cover: South African
star Tyla Rattray's
looking for MX2 gold
in 2006**

**(Alex Hodgkinson)
Contents main image:
Mud, mud, glorious mud
– hardcore British MX
at Matchams
(Sutty)**

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
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WTC RETURNS

Hawkstone date for UK world trial

AFTER THE super-successful return of world trials to our shores in 2005, organisers L+M Events are looking to carry this momentum forward when they stage the '06 British round of the WTC at Hawkstone Park on July 29/30.

DBR will be heavily involved in pre-event promotion but it's our sister publication Trials and Motocross News that's stepped up to the plate as title sponsor for the event.

Over 8000 fans packed the Shropshire venue in 2005 to witness hero Dougie Lampkin snatch a last-gasp victory and L+M Events' Jake Miller is hoping for more of the same.

"Last year's homecoming was highly anticipated and did not fail to live up to expectations with the event being regarded not only as one of the best trials the nation has ever hosted but as one of the truly great motorcycling sporting occasions of the last decade."

Never a company to rest on their laurels, L+M Events are working hard to improve certain aspects so that they can build on the foundations of last year and deliver an even better weekend of sporting action this time around. In addition to the actual competition itself there will also be a bigger trade village and an extended entertainment programme for Saturday, including a very exciting Mini Masters trial.

Trials legend Martin Lampkin – dad of Dougie and himself a former world champ – will once again lead the course design and build team with section plotting planned to start as early as this month.

Bradford and District Motor Club will again take charge of the huge cast of observers, officials and technical staff. Anyone interested in offering their services can contact Ron Eddings on 01282 619499 or via email at info@bradfordtrials.co.uk



THERE'S BEEN a bout of bad news for our Extreme TV loving legend Stuart Clapp this month. Not only did some lowlife scum kick his back doors right in, they also had a good root around his luxury London flat and then stole his prized 61in flat screen Sony and a bunch of other goodies.

But the biggest gutter of all to our boy Stoooo is the fact the dirty bastards also bagged his favourite Dakine backpack – a gift from his beautiful wife Zoë – to carry it all away in. But enough about the Clappmeister's misfortune and on to the soothing goodness that only Extreme TV's programming can offer.

April's schedules are packed full with even more

moto goodness than a swiped backpack can hold and with top-notch programmes including the IFMXF freestyle championships, Winter-X X, the entire Moto PIG series and the return of Hardcore Candy featuring hot host Amanda Mackay – mmmmmkay! There's also some Canadian snowcross action for all you sledheads out there so what are you waiting for – get tuned into Extreme TV right now.

We would be watching it ourselves but we're off down the boozer, we hear some geezer's knocking out a big-ass TV and some other assorted electrical goods at the right price... So until Stoooo makes his triumphant return next month check out www.extreme.com for full programme listings.

Wedding belle!

A CAUSE for great celebration in the DBR offices last month were the nuptials of gorgeous advertising ace Sophie Ferguson to skirt-wearing AMCA MXer Jay Elder. Here's to lots of luck and happiness in the future you two!



© High Wood Photography



results

PRO 125

1	Billy MacKenzie	(Bike-It/Dixon Yamaha)	50+47=97
2	Shaun Simpson	(Wulfsport Honda)	45+43=88
3	Brad Anderson	(Pioneer Yamaha)	35+50=85
4	Alan Keet	(JMX KTM)	47+35=82
5	Kristian Whatley	(Hanson Honda)	31+41=72
6	Shane Holmes	(Yamaha)	30+31=61

PRO OPEN

1	Danny Smyth	(Honda)	47+45=92
2	Mark Hucklebridge	(MotoXtreme Kawasaki)	39+47=86
3	Jamie Lewis	(PAR Honda)	43+43=86
4	Mark Eastwood	(Wiseco Honda)	35+50=85
5	Alex Rach	(PAR Honda)	41+37=78
6	Martin Barr	(Bike-It/Dixon Yamaha)	50+24=74

AMATEUR 125

1	James Lane	(Honda)	35+35+45=115
2	Ashley Williamson	(Kawasaki)	43+37+29=109
3	David Hartley	(Honda)	7+50+50=107
4	Sam Simmons	(Yamaha)	45+13+47=105
5	David Blackburn	(Honda)	29+30+41=100
6	Dave Wall	(KTM)	27+33+39=99

AMATEUR OPEN

1	Richard-Mike Jones	(Honda)	47+50+50=147
2	Danny Blakely	(Yamaha)	50+47+45=142
3	Charlie Hollis	(Honda)	45+35+47=127
4	Nigel Kibble	(Yamaha)	43+45+39=127
5	Ray Syson	(Kawasaki)	33+43+43=119
6	Mark Fernley	(Yamaha)	37+29+41=107





The monsters of mud converge on Matchams for round one of the revitalised British Masters MX series

Words and photos by Suttly

AFTER SEEMINGLY slipping off the motocross map in 2005 the British Masters MX series is back with a bang for '06. The five-round AMCA Pro-sanctioned championship has picked up British clothing manufacturer Wulfsport as a title sponsor and if round one at Matchams is anything to go by the British Masters are going from strength to strength.

The Matchams Park circuit is soft and choppy for the amateurs and schoolies on day one but it still makes for some good racing from the 200-plus riders in attendance. But as the Pro racers roll in to the venue overnight so does a band of stormy weather which dumps enough rain on the circuit to turn it into a right boggy mess.

Billy Mac makes easy work of the bad conditions to win the 125 class. An easy start-to-flag win in the opener is backed up by a come-from-behind second in race two. Brad Anderson wins the final moto but a start straight crash in the opener keeps the Tow Law resident down in third overall behind

Wulfsport Honda's Shaun Simpson who sneaks second with a 3-4 scorecard.

Consistency is the key to success in the Open class as reigning 125 champ Danny Smyth takes the overall with second and third place moto finishes. Runner up is Monster Mark Hucklebridge whose 6-2 beats Jamie Lewis' 4-4 courtesy of the better second moto tiebreak rule.

Pioneer Yamaha's new signing Arunas Gelazninkas looks to have moto one in the bag but a late moto crash from the Lithuanian star allows Bike-it Dixon Yamaha rider Martin Barr to take the chequers. In moto two Mark Eastwood holds on to take the win after early leader Jordan Rose crashes out and Welsh boyos Mark Jones and Glen Phillips both suffer from rear sprocket failure in the grinding paste conditions.

The Wulfsport British Masters head to Culham Moto Park in Oxfordshire for round two on March 18/19. For more information on the revitalised series check out www.britishmastersmx.com





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MARC DE REUVER

Dutch sandfly who's going for MX2 gold



RAGA WINS, DOUGIE DAZZLES!

Belfast boost for Lampkin

ADAM RAGA may be odds-on favourite to retain his title but the big news – as far as we're concerned – from the WITC is Dougie Lampkin's fantastic podium at the Belfast round of the world championship.

Dogie's four-popper HRC Montesa simply isn't as competitive indoors as the two-strokes so his second place at the Events 22-organised sixth round of the series at the Odyssey Arena was an awesome achievement.

With nine events gone and the top men jetting off to Brazil for back-to-back South American events before the series signs off in Madrid it's Raga's to lose with the Catalan holding a 15-point lead over fellow Spaniard Albert Cabestany.

But the Belfast result should have Dogie revved up and ready to go for the opening round of the outdoor championship in Spain on April 2. And after all, that's the series that really matters and Yorkshire's finest desperately wants his world crown back!

Photo Ian Roxborough



RYAN VOASE

The Kawasaki kid sets his sights Stateside

Plus... MX, trials and enduro world championship action, new Dixon Yamaha signing Julien Bill, Lyng Brit champs, all the usual columns and shedloads more stuff...



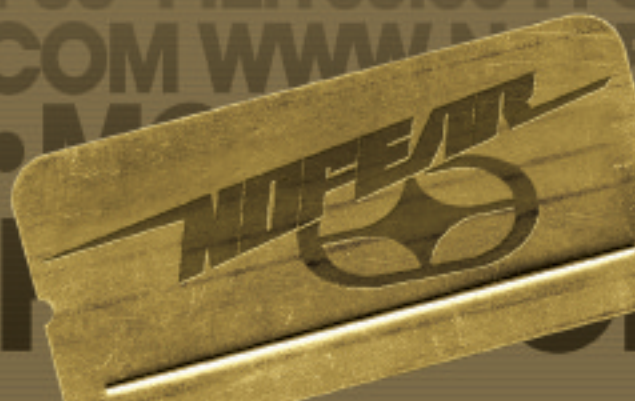
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"I'm now really looking forward to the races at Hawkstone and the first British championship round - I love racing in England and it's great to see all the fans. Yep! I'm glad to be back..."



Home boy!

After three weeks on the road in Europe the factory Kawasaki star's glad to be back in Britain and looking forward to the coming season

THIS MONTH has been pretty crazy – starting with a road trip in my camper to Mantova in Italy. I left early on Thursday and didn't get there until late Friday night by which point I was feeling very tired and totally sick of driving.

Saturday was taken up with practice and one-on-one races which were great for the spectators before we got down to business on the Sunday. I got a fifth in the opening race which I was happy about and then seventh in the second. I then crashed at the start of the third moto which left me with a broken kickstart.

My mechanic Luca legged it back to get it fixed so I could go out and do a few laps and I came away from the meeting feeling good but wanting to do some more testing on the bike.

The team stayed at Mantova on Sunday night ready for a photoshoot the following day with Ray Archer which went very well and resulted in some great images for posters that we'll be handing out to the public this year.

Tuesday was spent testing suspension with Kayaba and on both days the club was kind enough to make us all a great lunch of fresh pasta washed down with espresso coffee that was strong enough to keep us wide awake until the evening.

I also had to take Jodie out for a meal as it was Valentine's Day – trying to find somewhere to park my camper up in a small Italian town was fun but eventually all went well. Phew! Safe for another year...

We stayed in Italy for the rest of the week to keep up the punishing testing schedule and all was going well until the water-pump went on my camper. Now don't get me wrong, it's not ideal knowing you won't get a shower for a couple of days but, oh my god, try telling that to your girlfriend!

Luckily, one of the main Kentucky camper places was just down the road and they were so helpful and gave me a brand new pump.

So smelling a lot fresher we then took off for the South

of France and the next race at Pernes. The Molson Kawasaki boys met up with us and we had another photoshoot with the rest of the European Kawasaki teams before the French Kawasaki team cooked everybody dinner. In true French tradition we didn't start eating until 9pm but it was a good laugh and, of course, good food.

The entry list for Pernes was very strong with only a couple of the GP riders missing so I knew it was going to be a good day of racing. Sunday started with timed training for our gate position – I really liked the track and was pleased to post the second fastest time.

In the opening race I started about ninth and could feel that I was riding a bit tight but I came through and ended up sixth. In the second my start let me down but I felt more relaxed – even though I wasn't riding to my full potential – and finished in seventh for

fourth overall which wasn't at all bad really.

I'm reasonably happy with the way the first couple of internationals have gone and I've come away with a bit of homework to catch up on to make sure I'm 100 per cent ready for the coming season.

I'm now really looking forward to the races at Hawkstone and the first British championship round – I love racing in England and it's great to see all the fans. Yep! I'm glad to be back...



SWORD

Wade #74

Words by Stephen Sword Photo by Alex Hodgkinson

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"So the next morning Justin, Iain, Burnsy and myself all jumped out of a perfectly good plane at around 12,500 feet - I'm talking 120mph instant free-fall for about 55 seconds and then pull the cord and you parachute down at around 30mph"

Good to go!

Gordy's all set for the start of the new season - and judging by the rest of the racers in Ireland he's not the only one

FOR THOSE of you who I didn't get chance to speak to at Hawkstone I'd just like to say welcome to the 2006 motocross season.

Everyone seems to be in start-of-year-over-enthusiastic mode. It's the same every season I find. Guys have new bikes, new gear, have been training all winter and have new muscles and therefore are more than happy to be out in the crappy cold winter elements putting the laps in.

You know everyone seems to have the attitude that it's going to be their year and become so motivated that they're willing to dedicate themselves to a creditable standard.

What you'll find is that after the first few races reality kicks in and you're still finishing where you did in the previous year - motivation stops, training slows, practice becomes unimportant and all of a sudden you're left thinking maybe it's not going to be my year. My advice is to not get too excited too soon and simply focus on leading your targeted championship on the last lap of the last race at the last round.

So now that I've gone off on one with advice for the too-excited-too-soon brigade you may be thinking what this teabagging Irish idiot is on about, especially after he's just been in California for a month's pre-season prepping. The difference between you and I is that this is my job/career/income/life/dream so I have to go at it with a very different approach to the average hobby rider. I don't do this just for fun - yes I enjoy it but that's just an added extra!

If you're a regular reader of this column you'll maybe remember that last month I didn't write about much other than my trip to California. Well I've still got plenty to add about the USA trip but I'll try not to write too much about it as it gets very boring harping on about me, myself and I all of the time. But I can't resist mentioning one more thing though as it's something worth doing yourself if you ever get the chance.

My friend Burnsy was also in the States helping Justin Reid who was there doing the ATV Nationals at Glen Helen. Burnsy phoned me on the Thursday and said 'we're at Lake Elsinore, do you fancy doing a sky dive?' Iain and I casually said 'yeah, sure' so Burnsy booked us in.

So the next morning Justin, Iain, Burnsy and myself all

jumped out of a perfectly good plane at around 12,500 feet - I'm talking 120mph instant free-fall for about 55 seconds and then pull the cord and you parachute down for about another six minutes at around 30mph. Now that was 'some craic' as they say in Northern Ireland. Like I said earlier - if you get the chance do it.

Once back home I had to get myself up to Belfast for the International Motorcycle Festival they held in the Odyssey. Iain had presented two superb looking show bikes that were on display on our stand.

Team boss Roger has been working hard and we all

looked the part in our new team uniforms and with freshly stickered up bikes. As well as setting up a team website - teamwulfsport.com - Roger has also pulled in some welcome local sponsors including discoverireland.com and the Northern Ireland Events Company who I'm proud to be associated with as part of the team.

Wiseco will also be supplying us with their quality range of pistons while Works Connection have agreed to support the team which is something I'm pretty chuffed about as their latest clutch lever perch is sweet as.

Motorex lubricants and DID chains are both world championship winners and with them on board our jobs will be

made a lot easier. During my 'mentioned far too often' trip to America I met with a friend of a friend. I'm particularly glad I did seeing as he's come through with an awesome sponsorship package for us. TREMX.com is his company and his help is of great value to me. The new season's looking good!

The team in its full attendance had a photoshoot with the now slimline version of Steve Dagger who took some handy shots of us for the website with his camera phone. For anyone who's suffering a bit of brain fade the bit about the camera phone is a joke - Dagger is one of the best flashers around. He's proper pro I tell thee!

Okay, seeing as I'm starting to talk a total pile of shoit I'm gonna leave it at that and get on with my day job. Be sure to have fun on that bike now when you're riding it.

Good luck at the races!

Words by Gordon Crockard Photo by Shagger Dagger



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"Following a lot of testing and some decent lights from Trail Tech we finally got a set-up that would keep me lit properly. I think I will do more of these events as Knighter's said the Erzberg race in Austria is out of this world"



Extreme Dreams!

His podium at Hell's Gate has given Paul a taste for hardcore enduros

WHAT A busy month with some good results and a lot of fun. First off was a trip to Italy to ride in the Hell's Gate race – I had been warned that this race was pretty brutal and when you hear that from Knighter you know there could be a potential problem. Anyway, he was right but after a long hard race I ended up third overall.

The trip was made more enjoyable by not only the daddy (Justin) but his team of Truro man, Lambo man and the other man (don't know his name). Anyway, must say that they are a great group of lads and were on top form throughout the three days – hopefully they will all be back next year to help us again in this event.

Also helping me a lot at Hell's Gate was Steve Plain who had spent a lot of time sorting out my lights after The Tough One disaster. Following a lot of testing and some decent lights from Trail Tech we finally got a set-up that would keep me lit properly. I think I will do more of these events as Knighter's said the Erzberg race in Austria is out of this world and maybe harder than Hell's Gate so it seems like we will have to do it!

Other things that have been going on this month include some local MX racing at Wilden Lane where I finally managed to win and relieve Tom of £60. These events have been great preparation for the up-and-coming season as racing MX certainly helps with your speed and conditioning.

Next point of call was the first round of the BEC at Breckland. It was a one-day race with a totally new special test and the event was going to be quite tight on time as the old boys from down there like to see us racing flat-out all day through the forest. The event itself went pretty smooth and the bike ran with no problems, the end result being second to you know who and victory in the E2 class.

However, the old boys had to give us more time on the final check point which meant more riders cleaned it than should have! But it was good trying to pass everyone and good experience for my forthcoming three-hour races. Which brings me nicely onto the big news this month...

Finally the boys from the US have got back to me and we have agreed to go GNCC racing as many times as possible this season. The deal has enabled me to fly, race and fly home which is what I want to do. We've got good



support from American Honda who will help out by giving me a special bike to race on so at the moment I am pretty pleased that it has all come together as people are not aware how difficult it is to get deals at the moment.

Speaking of deals, everything is going good with the PAR Honda team and we are celebrating the arrival of young Jason Thomas (Rat Boy) back onto the team. However, more important for me is the arrival of his dad Jeremy who's a top cook and entertainer! And I must say well done to all the lads as I know they all put 100 per cent in at the first race.

Just to let you all know that Whibley will not be part of the team this year as we couldn't agree terms on a contract that would benefit both parties. But I'm pleased to see he has a deal in the US where he will be racing Hondas – I wish him all the best.

Right now time is very tight and we have been very busy in the shop but I will be leaving that behind and focusing on racing. I think it will be good to go back to the US as the off-road scene is certainly on the up and also there are more high-profile events over there than ever before. When back in England I will be trying to do as many WOR and Putoline Fast Eddy Races as possible so I can keep fit and strong to try and catch Mr Salminen in the GNCCs.

Finally this month I must say a big thank you to Putoline, Michelin, MD and Rush Racing for sticking with the Fast Eddys – the first round is on April 30 and I hope to see you all there...

Fast Eddy

Words by Paul Edmondson Photo by Jonty Edmunds

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"Sunny and dry in February is unheard of in Ireland so when it happens during mid-term break you can be assured that the motocross fraternity will take full advantage of this pre-season gift from Mother Nature"



Freak Weather

Blue skies are not an everyday occurrence in February in Ireland so the Emerald Isle's racers are busy making the most of them

I'M SURE by the time DBR goes to print that our weather supplier will have realised that it's still winter and adjust it accordingly. Sunny and dry in February is unheard of in Ireland so when it happens during mid-term break you can be assured that the motocross fraternity will take full advantage of this pre-season gift from Mother Nature.

Harry Corbett's Blaris Road practice facility has been running pretty much to capacity recently. Although there are no jumps the sand-based circuit cuts up rough which makes it ideal terrain to get bike fit.

I've had the pleasure this month of visiting Brian Scott's circuit just beside Desertmartin. To say Brian and his team have built a great practice track doesn't even come close. Deep sand means the circuit is open throughout the year and the many jumps that litter the track will test even the most professional of riders. Thanks Brian for a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

Speaking of tracks, Desertmartin will host round one of the Ulster MX1 championship which is already generating quite a stir among the rank and file. With defending champ Martin Barr committed to a season of GPs and the British series there'll be precious little time for the Larne man to ride at home this year leaving the title chase wide open.

In what were "the worst conditions that I've ever raced in" the Bike-it Dixon Yamaha rider mastered the treacherous conditions, taking a commanding win by over 20 seconds in the first British Masters moto of the year. Moto two was less productive as the track claimed all but 18 of the Pro Open class.

Things are sure looking good for Ireland's latest export but besides racing against many of the world's fastest riders extreme danger may be found a little closer to home – in the kitchen to be exact. Yes indeed, the talented duo of Barr and Billy MacKenzie may shine on the track but Jamie Oliver they are not! One can only imagine the culinary delights that will be conjured up in the kitchen of Billy's new house throughout the season.

Meantime, back on the local front there have been a few casualties already as the pre-race preparations start to

move into panic mode. I'd like to wish a speedy recovery to Jason Garrett who sustained a shoulder injury while young Andrew Reid has broken a leg – get well soon guys!

Billy Nutt's Ulster Motorcycle show was another resounding success although in terms of off-road presence it was Roger Magee's Wulfsport team who held court.

Gordon Crockard was there, looking and sounding like the GC of old. The Newtownards racer is one hungry man and Crock Star is working hard towards his goal – nothing less than winning back his British crown will do. But what about GPs?

GC is under no illusions. There are over 20 really fast guys in the MX1 class this year and the early races will be hard as he struggles to regain his momentum but Gordon is not going to just make up the numbers. The final position at the end of the year is not so important, what is though is getting a few good race finishes to reinstate GC as the front runner we all know he can be.

Team AJ Plumbing riders Andrew O' Brien and Davey Gorman have been working hard both in the gym and on the track. Davey will race 125cc Husqvarna machinery with the support of Hugh McAvoy motorcycles. By all accounts the two-stroke tiddler was trucking around Blaris. Some would say that

with Husqvarna offering a two-year warranty they could be in for a hiding with Davey in the saddle. On a positive note the machine is fast, stylish and if Davey hasn't managed to break it already I dare say it can't be broken!

Another two-stroke pilot this year is multi Ulster champ Tommy Merton. Tommy will race a 250 Yamaha under the DG Williamson banner and campaign a 125 Rainey Brothers bike in the MX2 and summer supercross series.

Finally, congratulations to Jeff Davidson and son Andrew on the opening of their premises on Scolban Road in Dromore – a welcome extension to Glenhead Race Support Services. With over 15 years in MX Jeff is an authority in the preparation and maintenance of the modern four-stroke dirt bike and he specialises in engine rebuilds and suspension servicing.



Barr humbug! Martin goes mud wrestling at Matchams

Words by Stevie Mills Photo by Suttly

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Stevie



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GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? Well here's where you should be saying it...

What Bike?

My name is Chris and I ride a 125cc pit bike which I'm getting bored of now. I was hoping you could give me some advice on what motocross bike to ride – I was thinking of a KX65 but will it be powerful enough?

Chris, South Wales

Well 65cc bikes are usually ridden by nippers up to the age of 11 so if you're in that category you should be fine. If you're older than that you might want to look at something a little bigger maybe. Good luck with your search!

Walker Bites Back!

You may remember that in last month's magazine 'Name withheld' of South Wales wrote in tearing down our tech ed for being somewhat shabby at supercross. Well, Wakker's demanding right of reply!

Over to you Godfrey...

Thanks for your kind words my friend. I've not got much to say in my defence but please keep in touch as I'll need your details so I can enter you for the supercross later in the year. I'm pretty ****t at it so you're very welcome to have a go in my place.

I'll fully prepare the KX to your exact requirements, bring it to the race, provide you with every piece of kit you need and then spanner for you for the night.

Okay, I'm just off for a burger...

Geoff, Marshfield

Quad Plod!

Just a quick Juan to ask who was the painfully slow ejjit on a quad I met in Spain? Geoff something or other I think his name was. All I can say is it was a good job he was on a quad because there's no way he would've stayed upright on two wheels. And he looks like he trains at McDonalds!

Juan, Spain

Blast from the Past!

I've been buying DBR since 1994 and this is only the second time I've got in contact. The first time was back in 1995 when I asked for an address so I could write to Stefan Everts which I was soon supplied with.

Once again I'm hoping to be supplied with contact information. This time I was wondering if you could supply me with some web addresses for places that I can order DVDs from. I've been searching to find where I can order the AMA nationals and supercross reviews from but have been unsuccessful so far.

All information you can pass my way will be gratefully received. I would prefer websites so I can browse their full catalogues instead of just seeing what they advertise in the magazine. I look forward to hearing from you.

Peter, via email

Well Peter it should be well worth checking out www.one11mx.com as they've got both DVDs you're after and a whole lot more to boot. Oh and don't leave it so long before getting in touch next time...anyone would think you only write to us when you want something and that kinda hurts our feelings!

Tartan Power!

Congratulations on a magnificent magazine but how about a bit more recognition for the Scottish motocross scene?

I enjoy the regular features on Stephen Sword, Billy MacKenzie and Shaun Simpson who've all fought a long hard battle to get where they are now but what about the other Scots like Craig Trew and Neil Flockhart who race hard at each and every event and that's after travelling one hell of a long way every weekend. That's commitment!

There's a lot of talent north of the border and it's only fair they get a mention.

Brian, Dundee



Practice Prang!

Just thought I would write into the mag to share my story. I went to my local practice track on Sunday to get some bike time in on my shiny new CRF250. I felt a bit rusty but soon got back into the flow of things after a couple of laps.

Anyway, six laps in as I approach this cool little rhythm section I suddenly spot a bright yellow Suzuki stuck bang in the middle of a double jump. I'm already committed so I gotta see this one through so I have to make the decision – plough in the back of him or lean the bike and 'Bubba Scrub' to the side of him (something I have never tried before in my life).

Despite this fact I opt for the latter and lean the bike over and somehow avoid him and things are going good but next on the list is the landing and this wasn't so good. I landed on such a severe angle the bike bucked back up to its other side and then continued along the dirt with me attached – eventually ploughing through the fence. I stood up feeling okay if a little bit sore.

I was helped off the track with my dad and girlfriend rushing around making sure I was okay. I started to feel a stinging sensation around my inner thigh so I popped over to the track medic to get myself checked out expecting to see a couple of cuts and grazes. Needless to say when I dropped my race jeans and saw an eight inch hole in my leg staring back at me my own painkillers kicked in as I dropped to the floor in a heap.

Four hours and a heap of drugs and stitches later I'm now ready to spend the next couple of months merely staring at my bike wondering what could have been.

So the moral of the story is enjoy every single minute that you're out on your bike because every so often it may just attack you and pull you across the floor by its footpeg – I know this because I found a couple of lumps of flesh attached to it.

Simon, via email

Simon did actually send us some pictures of his gaping gash but they were far too graphic to show in DBR which is and always will be a family publication. We hope you're back on the bike soon Simon but this time make sure you stay on it!

We know exactly where you're coming from Brian (Scotland by the sound of things – SL) as we seem to spend waaay, waaay too many hours sat in the outside lane of the M6 as we travel to events up and down the country.

We also agree that Brit MX regulars such as Trew, Neil Flock and even Billy's kid brother Stevie – and his cousin Bryan – deserve more recognition than they're getting at the moment. Their time will come mate so just keep on reading and be patient...



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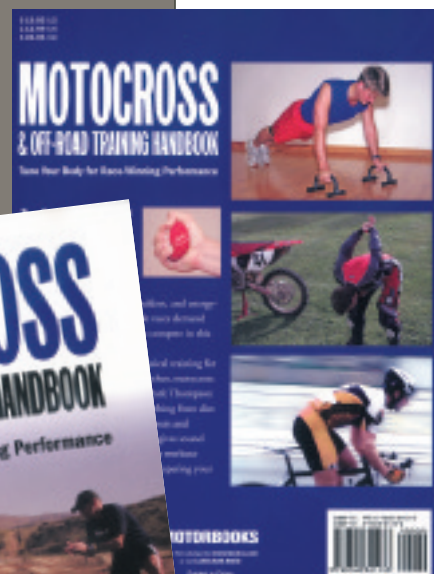
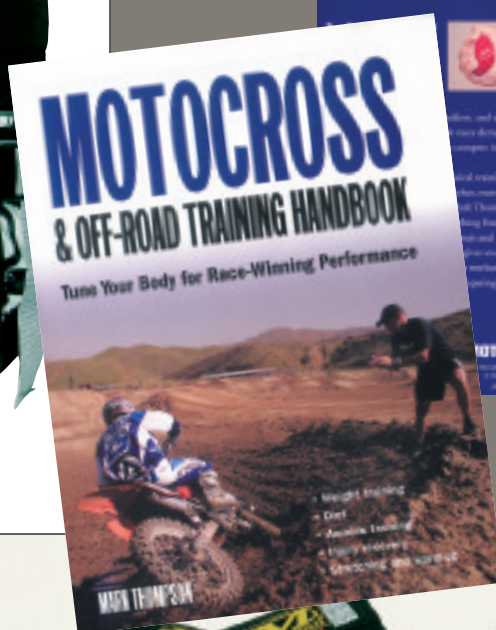
If you want good advice on how to get in shape for a season of motocross or enduro racing and you can't quite afford to splash out on a personal trainer such as DBR's very own MX Medic Alan Milway you could do a lot worse than read Mark Thompson's latest publication – Motocross & Off-Road Training handbook.

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It's not just hippies and tree-huggers who can help save seals these days as online based motocross shop mxbits.com are now importing the full range of American manufactured Seal Savers products. The neoprene-based range of products are available in a range of sizes to help save your fork seals (we all know there's nothing worse than the mess blowing a seal can make), your thumbs, your boots and even your palms – we think they mean yo' hands and not the present your Aunt Flo brought back from Marbella. For more information on the oh so practical range of products check out www.sealsavers.co.uk – trade enquiries are also welcome.

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The ATV Offroad Fury series of games were considered by many as the finest MX game for the PS2 until the arrival of MX Unleashed and MX Vs ATV Unleashed that also came from the same development company – Rainbow Studios. But for the third installment of the Offroad Fury series previously little heard of – in the MX games market at least – Southpeak Interactive have taken over.

Although the new title plays slightly differently to the previous two it's still a very enjoyable and will suck you in and have you battling away with your buddies or the AI riders until the early hours of the morning. Players can choose from 24 pimpable ATVs and there's enough different tracks, competitions, kit combos and mini games to keep you coming back to this title time and time again.

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YEAR OF THE RATT?



He should have won last year's MX2 crown but a busted shoulder dumped Tyla Rattray's world title aspirations on their arse - now the 20-year-old South African's aiming to make '06 his year before he heads to the States...

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

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Family Focus

STYLA'S INNER CIRCLE

Stepfather Wayne Lumgair is Tyla's personal manager and practice mechanic while his younger brother Kelly is race technician.

"Kelly also cracks the whip a bit when I'm not riding well. That's good for me and it's easier to take from family. He's also one of the best mechanics in the GP paddock and Wayne takes care of all my affairs and drives the camper."

"You have to know that the bike is perfect and I know I can trust Kelly implicitly. Being so close is just another element in that trust."





HE WAS the crown prince after his buddy BT moved up to MX1 but Tyla Rattray's 2005 world title-chasing ambitions were put on hold when he bust his shoulder at the Portuguese GP.

With a hat-trick of victories on his return to GP action at the end of last summer, the 20-year-old from Durban put his name back in the frame. And he sets out on this campaign with just one aim – to enter the record books as South Africa's third world champ before following the path of Greg Albertyn and Grant Langston to the States.

"Injury can happen to anybody anytime in our sport but I feel confident enough in my ability and my fitness to know that I don't need to push 100 per cent in the early races. I'm looking for good results to be in there in the points but I don't need to win in Zolder.

"I'll take it if it's there but I'm not going to break my neck to beat Marc [De Reuver] there. Consistency will win the title and I'll settle for

two seconds there. I'm going for the championship, not for race wins!"

Ironically, it was the '05 injury which gave Styla the time to consider his future as he recovered from surgery on both the shoulder and a knee which had been niggling for some time. Already one of the fittest boys on the track, he put the enforced sabbatical to good use.

"Being out for half of last season really brought home to me how important it was to have good basic fitness. I was out cycling for two-and-a-half hours and running for an hour every day. It was no surprise to me when I came back and won the final three GPs.

"And I was still too heavy then. I don't think I've ever been lazy but I'm getting out of that teenage stage and I definitely need to be more precise with my training. I put on a lot of weight when I was back home with no racing and spending a lot of time drinking and partying. But

I am already seven kilos lighter than last year and I'm still trying to lose a little more – I don't want to let Cairoli holed out every GP!

"I knew when I came back that I was ready to start winning again straight away because I didn't actually race until I was ready. I had been back on the bike for several weeks and I knew I would still be strong at the end of two motos.

"I worked hard on base training again while I was back home in SA from November to January so I'm ready for it this year. The weather was good, I was out cycling every day and I've worked a lot on my shoulders and they are a lot stronger now. My knee too is now 100 per cent. I have two gym exercise programmes, one day combining five sets of exercises for shoulders and two sets for my legs and the next day doing five with the legs and two with the shoulders. When I went for the fitness tests with KTM they told me my level was unbelievable.

"I've already been doing motos in Italy



Nicoll says...

KURT LOOKS AHEAD

"We will not be pushing Tyla to ride the AMA SX next year. In fact, it is our wish that he sits it out for a year and starts off with the outdoor Nationals. We offered Ben the same option if he had stayed with us and I think his injury proves how much better it would have been. You cannot just jump straight into AMA SX.

"This season, after five years, Grant finally looks safe in SX and Mike Alessi is definitely doing it the right way, building race-by-race after a season of Nationals. They are hard enough but the tracks are at least halfway towards SX and a perfect introduction."

since I got back and we've done a lot of work on the starts. I won Lierop last year from dead last but I'm a factory rider and I shouldn't have been getting those starts I got last year.

"KTM sent me a factory bike down to SA to train on and when I got back I rode my new race bike – they've changed the gearbox and we've been trying different exhausts and carburettors. I feel we have a good set-up now.

"I've done a lot of starts in Belgium and in Italy and I've been practising them with Georges Jobe behind a proper startgate and he's helped me a lot. He's given me tips with body position and it's definitely helped. We talked about things like corner speed too – he's a real asset to the whole KTM team. He has such a strong head and is helping us all out. He is still able to relate to the modern machine and he sees us riding when we change something on the bike

and can often tell us what we are doing wrong. He is analysing the change by watching us."

Still, Tyla knows that the world series is no cakewalk. "Cairolì will be tough. He has the title and he will want to keep it. His greatest strength are his starts – he gets out of the gate so fast and that was what led him to learn the speed of running at the front back in 2004. Once you're up there every week you learn the speed. But I'm a year smarter too!

"De Reuver's going be up there with us for speed and little Pourcel has a big heart but in the end it will come down to who is most consistent. Everts was not the fastest guy for much of last season but he was the most consistent. Ben was faster last year but Stefan was there every race and at the end he was the fastest guy again when it counted.

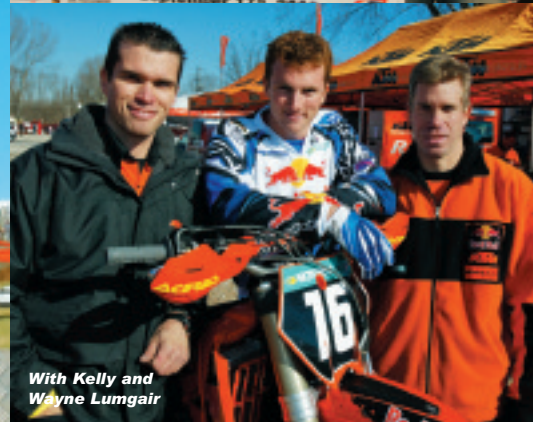
"But I'm not going out there to worry about

other riders. If I go out there and do everything right then that should be enough. I can ride all types of track – sand, hardpack, loamy tracks, tracks with jumps, tracks without. A lot of riders are fast but a lot of it is down to hard work and you see that a lot of them fade at the end of the second race.

"If you watched that last race at the Nations you could see that Carmichael and Ben were the fittest. None of the rest could keep it going. A lot of them were very tired at the end. If I am sitting in second a couple of laps from the end of race two I'm pretty sure I won't have a problem to win, particularly at the hot races."

For all his self-confidence Tyla is not afraid to admit the debt he owes to BT. "We already knew each other good from the year together at Vangani but '04 was the breakthrough year for me, being together with Ben on the Champ

Tyla's joined by Cairoli and De Reuver on the podium



With Kelly and Wayne Lumgair



There's a Ratt in my kitchen!

team. We lived seven kilometres from each other and were always out there training together and pushing each other on.

"I'm going to miss Ben a lot this year, especially times like now when I'm sitting at a track with time on my hands. Training too. Maybe I can link up with Josh and TC now they are back but I've been mainly going out riding on my own these last few weeks."

Tyla was completely gob-smacked that BT told DBR last autumn he believed Tyla had more raw speed. "He really said that? It feels good. I never thought he'd say something like that to anyone, I thought he'd just keep it to himself.

"I think if we do a one-on-one I am as fast as him but Ben still has one up on me. He's the only rider I race with who can pass me whenever he wants.

"Perhaps he knows me too good. I'm not easy to pass but Ben always finds a way. Perhaps he knows – when it's me and him – if he gives me the option to shut off or we both crash I will shut off. I wouldn't do it with anyone else but with Ben I do."

But Tyla had his own secret too. "We always helped each other out but I always tried to let Ben do something first so that if someone had to crash it was him. I don't think he ever caught on, he just thought I was chicken. Perhaps I was but it worked out good for me. If he crashed then I didn't do it!

"But now I'm even more desperate to get to the States and show the world I'm faster!"

So how certain is the move across the big pond? "It's the plan and I have to decide for sure by the third or fourth GP. I have a two-year contract with KTM and they have to make their

plans too here or there depending on what I want to do."

Ironically, after BT's busted knee has forced him to sit out the current supercross season the two buddies could end up starting their AMA SX career together...or not!

"I still have to decide whether or not I will do the SX the first year. KTM are open on that as you saw with Alessi and I need to be ready. I'll be doing the big SX races in Europe like Bercy this year and I want to ride the East Coast when I start supercross, whether it be 2006 or 2007.

"It's not only because it gives you more time but also the West Coast tracks are rock hard and slicker. On the East there are more ruts, it's more technical. And I plan to live in Florida and hopefully train with Eldon so Ben and me can be back together again."



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THE CONTENDER!

profile

When Josh Coppins rolls up to the gate at Zolder on April 2 for the first GP moto of the '06 campaign the perennial underdog knows he's got a real shot at the title

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

THREE YEARS ago Josh Coppins – as he lay in traction after splintering his ankle – was told he would never race again. It's an injury which will see him limping for the rest of his life but the 29-year-old Kiwi, British champion for the last two seasons, goes into 2006 as the UK's most serious candidate for the premier world crown since the heady days of Graham Noyce, Dave Thorpe and Kurt Nicoll.

For much of his career Josh was considered by many to be cast – alongside the likes of Nicoll and Marnicq Bervoets – in the role of the eternal number two. So what has happened to make the veteran of 11 GP campaigns a winner at the very highest level?

"It's the next step, something I've been working towards all of my career since I came to Europe, what I've been striving for. And I've started winning GPs against the best. I beat Stefan and Ben last year fair-and-square, not just because they were hurt or not riding well.

"The Isle of Wight two years ago was important but the first moto in Sweden last summer was the real breakthrough. Ben came to me and I was able to hold him off quite comfortably. I'd never ever won a first moto at a GP before – I have always been better in the second – so I was sure I could win the second.

"It was a mental thing. I think I had to win in those circumstances, having someone of the calibre of Ben come onto my rear wheel and to beat them. I actually got it into my head that it

was just like practising. And from that situation I knew that I just had to concentrate on my lines and I had the speed to hold him off.

"And then in South Africa I passed Stefan for the win. I made a mistake on the second lap but I was always confident that I could come back at him. What surprised me was that I was faster in the sand section because that had always been one of Stefan's great strengths. But I had a few better lines and I think I wanted it more than him. I started it from the turn before the finish line and set him up through a combination of four turns."

In the end Everts rebounded to lift his ninth title but Josh has confidence in his 2006 challenge.

"It could have happened earlier. At the end of 2002 in Russia, Pichon already knew he had to nail me to win it and I think I would have carried that through if I hadn't got hurt. And my crash at Hawkstone last March cost me. I was only off the bike for 10 days but it was an important time of the year – just when everyone is accelerating for the first GP – and it took me until mid-summer to catch back up.

"I was still the only rider in MX1 last year apart from Stefan to finish and score in every single race and at CAS Honda we are now ready to take on anyone. The team is the best it's ever been with the bike and changes which we have made within the team to suit me and help me to go for the championship. ►

Coppins on...

...KEN DE DYCKER

"Ken is a big lad and people often forget that he is only 21. He's still got a lot to learn but he has heart and he sees the chance that he has with a good bike and I think he's going to surprise a few people this year if he can maintain the work ethic which he has now.

"He proved already last year that he can be blisteringly fast. There was a question mark against his fitness and commitment but with the support of the team he has found himself. We call him the genial giant. He needs people around him who will look after him and Neil's doing that and that will get the best out of him."



Jacky and Josh – working together

Vimond on...

...JOSH COPPINS

"Josh's greatest strength is his determination. We worked together for a few days in Belgium after the Nations to see if we could find a synergy. He is a really friendly guy, we established a good friendly relationship immediately and it was soon clear to me that he is prepared to work and work on any weak points in his effort to be champion.

"We have already worked on bike control. Josh's determination to succeed is so great that he had neglected some aspects of style in search of ever more speed. We have taken a step back to improve his technique because the speed will come again and he will benefit from riding more fluidly. He is one of the strongest riders I have ever met but he was wasting too much energy and that was sometimes costing him at the end of races. We are working to correct that."

Harry [Ainsworth – team director] is aware of that and has voiced it publicly and I feel I can claim to have been partly responsible for this.

"Harry tried to do it with Crockard but it never happened but with me we are maybe a year or two on, older and wiser and the team is much better prepared for the challenge than ever before. The budget is there with support from Honda UK and the whole team is making steps towards making sure I'm happy, that the bike's better. We're not just going racing for fun, we are out to beat the rest of the world and that makes the difference.

"We have worked towards having all of the right people in the right places and I have been working towards shaping the team in this way since I joined in 2003. I made them cut the team from four riders to two – there were simply not enough staff to go round for four riders. I made them focus more on me, I made the move to Belgium, the team has followed. The facilities for training there are the best in Europe and no-one other than the Italians have ever won without a base there.

"We have good workshop facilities and it is important that I have the whole team around me even when we go training. The bike is constantly being developed and no-one is

hopping backwards and forwards across the Channel any more. Even Neil [Prince – team manager] is in Belgium almost all of the time putting into effect everything I ask for.

"We have installed a feeling at CAS that everybody is there for everybody else. I think that was always there in a way but I hope that I have helped persuade them all to be professional in every way.

"Each of the staff has specific jobs – Fabio Santoni is my guru, he does my engines, he does the majority of the technical work. Roger Shenton is his helper. Andy Pringle is Ken De Dycker's mechanic and Paul Teasdale is his helper.

"Other teams usually have one personal mechanic per rider and then other staff for specific jobs but we have two plus two. I think Ken needs to have his two guys and I have to have mine. We are all working constantly together, pooling information. I've seen mistakes made when one person was solely responsible for one specific field because something has been overlooked and there has been nobody else there to spot it until it was too late.

"Kayaba will provide our suspension this year but Fabio still does a lot of the work himself and that was how I wanted it. He has



Josh gets a move on at the Pernes pre-season international

done all of my Showa stuff for the past two years and when we changed to Kayaba it was part of the deal that Fabio still gets to do a lot of the work himself. That was important for me because I wanted the person who is doing such a vital job for me to be there all the time.

"Fabio has been with me since I signed with Berni at the end of 2001. I met him when I went there to choose a mechanic and I knew straight away that he was the guy I wanted. In the course of time we have developed and fine-tuned a very precise working relationship and he has the knowledge to put my wishes into reality – any top rider will tell you he must have complete faith in his mechanic."

And the payroll doesn't stop there as nothing is being left to chance. "I am equally close with Stephan Nusser as physical trainer and Jacky Vimond with my riding. I personally pay for both of them and with both of them I am investing in my future. I see myself with a good chance this year and I don't want to look back at the end of the year and say to myself that I didn't give myself the best shot because I did not have everyone there at every race. And if I don't win I want to be able to say that I did everything I could to make it happen."

"Stephan is working exclusively for me this

year and was with me in New Zealand for three months. He gives me confidence within the physical training, the confidence that I am going to be able to sustain what he is having me do week-in, week-out for the entire season. He tells me what I must do and he can back it up with the technical proof – there are not many people out there who can do that.

"I started working with Jacky at the end of last year and I found him to be good. TC [Tom Church] worked with Jacky and I spoke with Tom about it but I knew I wanted Jacky after seeing him work with Sebastien [Tortelli] way back in 1998. It was a time when I was coming better as a rider and I saw then what he brought to Sebastien and has since been able to bring to Roncada, Vuillemin and Pichon.

"We spoke at the Nations and we have been together ever since. He came to Matchams for the British championship finale, I have trained in New Zealand on things he has put together with Stephan and I have spent the last two weeks with Jacky since I got back to Europe.

"He teaches me things, in my technical ability, in my riding. He's teaching me stuff

which I never thought about, he can spot things like I need to be more progressive on the front brake, I need to use my knees more here, I should be taking this line there. In the end it's down to me to decide if I take what he gives me but everything Jacky has given to me to date has worked.

"And I enjoy speaking with him about life in general, about life after motocross, learning from him what he has been through himself and with all of those other riders he has helped. He can even tell me where their weaknesses are, where are their strengths, what would they do in specific situations."

So what is Stefan Everts' Achilles heel? "Stefan's main weakness is that he doesn't like close racing. If you come underneath him and make an aggressive pass he'll tighten up and panic a bit. If you keep pressure on him he cannot ride as he wishes to ride. He likes to flow, to carry his lines and then he'll come faster and faster and faster as the gap grows. But if the gap doesn't grow, he can't ride his lines – he gets tighter and tighter. And he's not good at riding defensively. ▶

At the end of '06 Josh is aiming to trade in his #2 plate for something a little smaller



Coppins on...

...HIS BUDDY BEN

"I'm not missing Ben as much as I expected, simply because I've been very busy. But I have also enjoyed the free time I have had to myself. It's been very busy at my house for the last three years but I now have more time to be able to work closely with Stefan, Jacky and my team and that has brought us closer together."

"And I now have times when I can close the door and just be alone. That's important too. It's the sort of thing I talk to Jacky about outside of riding. But as a friend I do miss Ben and I am very sad about what has happened to him. But he will bounce back. He wouldn't be Ben if he didn't."

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It's all smiles from Harry and Josh

Coppins on...

...CAS HONDA

"It's irrelevant that we are not a factory team. I talked with Jacky about this and two of the things he said stick with me. First, it's irrelevant how much money you are earning as long as you are happy and it's irrelevant what your bike looks like as long as you're happy with the performance. "The team has spent hours and hours working in minute detail towards getting the perfect set-up for every type of going whether it be sand, hardpack or grassland. "There is actually reason to believe that we have the possibility to make an even better bike than a factory team because at CAS I can say what I want. If I walked in to Sylvain Geboers, Michele Rinaldi, Kurt Nicoll or Jan De Groot and said I didn't want to use their contracted suspension or whatever, no chance. They have their long-term business partners and that is what you will use. "I walked into a CAS meeting last year and told them what suspension I wanted, what tyres I wanted. Harry called me back three times because they had been with Showa since they started but they switched to Kayaba because I said I definitely wanted it. I couldn't do that with the factory teams. "Also I can ring up Harry and have a laugh. I could never do that with Sylvain – at Suzuki it was a business relationship pure and simple and I had to be diplomatic all the time. It is different with Harry."



"A world series against Stefan runs from the first moto to the last without a single breather. There's no way I'm going to win this championship by 40 points, building up a lead by halfway and then relaxing. It will be a battle every single race. Even if I'm 25 points clear I still have to keep pushing every moto because as soon as Stefan starts to feel confident again he can turn it round in no time at all."

The other title candidates at this stage are French. "Sebastien will be good. He's a fighter but he's not the Sebastien of 1998. He's coming off four years of being injured and he's riding an unproven bike. I saw what Ben went through last year with mistakes which should just not happen at out level. Rear brake failure at Teutschenthal and Nismes, the engine in Japan. There was only one race where Ben stuffed up and that was Portugal but I saw it at the test track, I saw it in the Belgian

championships when Ben DNFed nine motos out of 12 due to the chain breaking. He had to go back to the '04 engine because he couldn't start the '05 and, judging by what happened to Tortelli at Mantova, they haven't solved the problem yet. KTM is a good company with good people and a good bike but they have had problems and the '06 title will be too close for anyone to allow themselves those mistakes.

"I'd actually be more nervous racing Ben this year than either Sebastien or Mickael. Sebastien is a fighter – he won't give up and I'm not writing him off – but he is back in Europe for a reason and it is not because he wants to be here. He is here because it was the only way he could get back on a factory team in the States again in 2007 and that is a weakness. You need to be able to focus on the championship you are contesting, not riding it as a means to doing what you want the year after. He can tell himself he is here to win but in the back of his mind he is already focused on getting out of here at the end of the year.

"Mickael is one of the fastest guys in the world – if not the fastest – but I saw him last year with the chief mechanic of Martin Racing by the throat when he had one mechanical DNF from two years with the team. Sebastien just DNFed two of the first three races of the season and it is going to happen to Mickael. Can he stay calm and can Kurt, Pit and Jobe keep him under control?"

It was in the spring of 1995 that Josh pawned everything he had back home in NZ to lease the previous year's factory Suzukis and live on a shoestring.

"I think it was the right way to do it. I'm still getting better as a rider, improving year-in, year-out. I'm not a Ben Townley or a Sebastien Tortelli or a Christophe Pourcel, world class at 16 or 17 years old. I've had to fight my way up the rankings and there are those who expressed doubts I would ever make it. But who's to say that being on top of the world at 17 and retired at 25 is the right way to do it. I'm 29 and I think I've still got my best years ahead of me.

"And times have changed. I had no other choice. Back then no-one at the GPs was looking further than Europe for riders. I'm happy with the way I've done it, I'm proud of what I have achieved and now I want to round it off with a title. For many years I was considered the eternal number two but I'm not anymore and I think everyone knows it including Stefan. I wouldn't have had offers from five factory teams at the end of last year if that wasn't so!"







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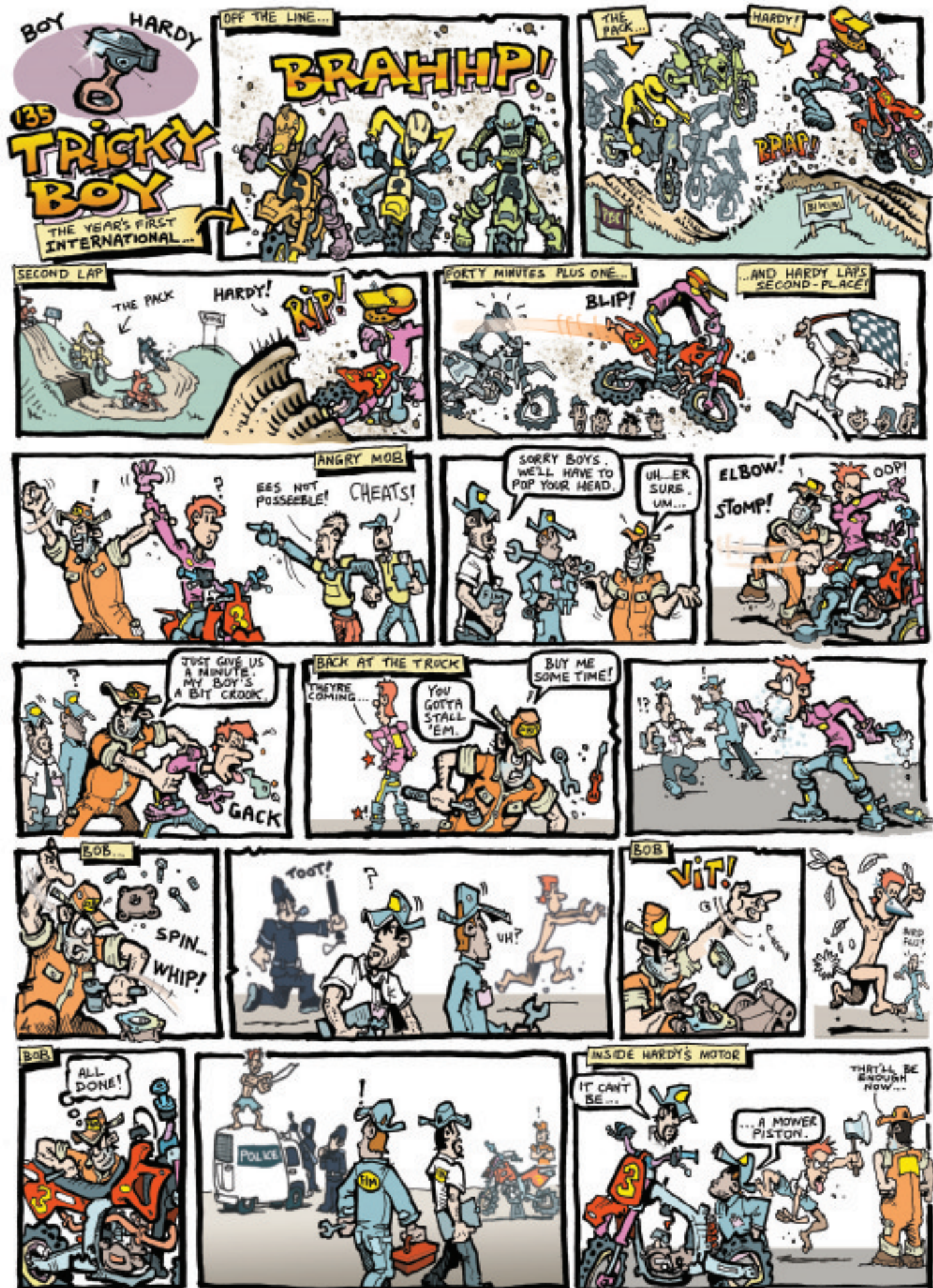
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BRING IT ON!

With the kick-off of the 2006 world championships just around the corner, it's time to take a look at GP MX's main movers and shakers

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

Everts leads into the opening corner at Mantova - will the nine-time champ make it #10 in '06?



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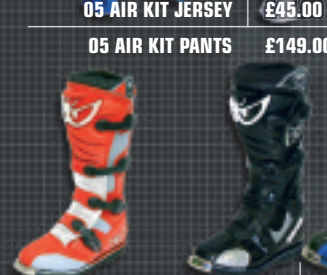
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Speedy Italian Tony Cairoli's out to defend his MX2 crown in 2006



Swordy's switched to MX1 but has he got the speed to run with the big boys?



Gordy's hoping his switch to Wulfsport Honda will revitalise him in MX1

THERE WILL be no fools at Zolder in Belgium on April 1 as 90 of the world's fastest motocrossers go in qualification for the following day's opening round of 15 in the 2006 world motocross championships.

The best 30 in each class – MX1 and MX2 – will make it to race day where the first points will be won and lost. But the warm-up races are already in full swing because nobody – repeat, nobody – will want to be too far off the pace from the word go.

Britain has connections with nine competitors in the premier class – including title challenger Josh Coppins and Stephen Sword – and eight more in MX2 including three overseas newcomers, two of the top rookies of '05 and two title candidates.

And, as final confirmation that the sport has changed irrevocably, for the first time since Noah parked the ark there will not be a single two-stroke at the line in either class!

But who can we expect to be hot?

MX1

It is his swansong year but there will be no unnecessary waving to the crowd from record champ Stefan Everts this summer. The

33-year-old Belgian wants title #10 and, by the way, he has started the year on Yamaha's new alu-framed flagship – anyone who wants to deny him will have to ride out of their skin.

At the season opener in Mantova the only moto from four which he didn't holeshot was the one in which he led by lap two and the most complete GP rider ever looks and feels as dashing as he has ever done in 17 years of GP motocross.

True, Sebastien Tortelli – the 27-year-old Frenchman who was the last person to deny Stefan a crown in a season when he wasn't hurt – passed his great rival twice to win quali and the first moto but these were 20-minute dashes. Everts was back on the Toomer by the chequered flag and you could not help feeling that, given the chance, Stefan welcomed the opportunity to study his returning rival.

And before they meet in deadly earnest Dyno has a little personal problem to solve. Twice – once in a flying lap KO competition and then after holeshotting race two – he killed the engine of his new toy under braking and lost a complete lap trying to revive its throaty roar.

KTM are once again making a major effort in the only class of off-road racing they



Nunny starts the season with a fighting chance on the Champ KTM MX2 team



Billy Mac: "Can you smell something Ash?"
Ash Kane: "Old Spice..."

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The Lounge Lizzard's looking to go one better this time around...



Will Ramon's switch to Suzuki land him the MX1 title?

gp preview

haven't yet won and newly-wed Mickael Pichon should find his incentive to win reawakened in his new colours. Completing the orange army is '05 rookie sensation Jonathan Barragan but the Spaniard faces a difficult start to the campaign after cracking a scaphoid.

Over at Suzuki Steve Ramon and Kevin Stribos both looked sharp at the '06 opener, Brian Jorgensen was back on it – as was '05 injury victim Garcia Vico – for Martin Honda and the Kawasaki double act of Tanel Leok and Stephen Sword look like twins as they give Jan De Groot a double spearhead again.

Swordy has no apprehensions about the task ahead of him and could be the surprise package of 2006 but the greatest threat to the Everts monarchy comes from elsewhere in the Brit pack – reigning British champ and world #2 Josh Coppins!

Josh is at the top of his game and showed at times last summer that he can even outpace the champ. Harry Ainsworth's crew has burnt the midnight oil for two years seeking every fraction of a second in their mechanical assistance and the 29-year-old Kiwi is ready to take over at the top.

Britain has lost three members of the old

guard – Coops, Burnham and Vehvilainen – this year as well as jovial J Yoshi Atsuta but the troops have been reinforced with three new imports with top 10 pedigree in Ken De Dycker, Pascal Leuret and Julien Bill. None of them will be champion but the Belgian in particular can advance if he can find endurance.

But what we really want to see is a native challenger. Swordy we have already mentioned, Mark Hucklebridge – his old sparring partner in the Marshfield Mafia – is back again but the man who must advance in 2006 is James Noble.

Nobby has been knocking on the door for several years and almost took his first podium last summer. Colin Reed will be looking for more consistent frontline performances and controlled aggression from the leader of his all-English team!

And then there are the Irish! Martin Barr will hope to assert himself regularly in quali while the Crock Star needs to emerge from a confidence-sapping season to put himself and Wulfsport Honda back on the map.

Surely the four-time GP winner cannot have forgotten how to race with the best that quickly. No, of course he hasn't...

MX2

Having lost the MX2 crown for only the second time in six years, KTM – the only manufacturer with a genuine works team in the class – are pulling no punches this year with no less than four top drawer players in Tyla Ratray, Marc De Reuver, David Philippaerts and Carl Nunn.

The South African is the big hope of the Austrian factory since BT jumped ship and his best-case scenario runs along the lines of world champ 2006, US outdoor 2007, AMA SX 2008. Injury last spring put the planning back one year but his return to win the final three GPs was impressive and mark the 20-year-old as a hot favourite.

But his team-mates are hot too. At 23 De Reuver must soon face up to the fact that he has missed the American boat but he must also endeavour to finish a season for the first time ever. He is fast beyond doubt but staying on two wheels has not always proved easy.

Philippaerts has better credentials. At 22 he served a long apprenticeship before grabbing his chance of a factory four-banger with both hands last summer and has rarely been off the podium since. A big boy who has rejected



KTM have called in Seb Tortelli to end Everts' reign



Molson Kawasaki's teen star Tommy Searle



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the SX route, David is a long-term prospect to win titles in both classes in the end but Mattighofen would probably prefer him to wait until 2007 for strike one.

And then there is Nunny. We all know he can ride but his Matchams moto win was his first at GP level for five years. Carl gets a second chance but the Austrians will want those results more often.

But the title is not in Mattighofen's trophy cupboard yet...

Tony Cairoli, the Sicilian wizard who rode the wheels off his De Carli Yamaha last year to take the crown in only his second full campaign, will not relinquish the #1 plate easily and is again Yamaha's main hope.

New team-mate Matteo Bonini, last year's leading genuine rookie, has potentially even better credentials long-term and should form a devastating twin spearhead but Rinaldi's

closest partners at Team Ricci may have to rely on old stager Chicco Chiodi to annoy the kids with his consistency.

Kenneth Gundersen doesn't look sharp enough after almost two seasons on the sidelines and Davide Guarneri appears to be more concerned with image as he picks a career number before even winning a GP overall.

The same might be said of the Pourcel brothers but Christophe has taken that path with the amateur number he will take to America full-time in 2008. Still five months off his 18th birthday, le nouveau Bayle is – with good reason – so highly-rated that Kawasaki let Swordy switch to MX1. He will be in the frame more often than he misses.

And then there are the UK-based challengers to consider...

Even at this stage Tommy Searle is tipped to

be rookie of the year, TC just hopes he can ride at his known pace for 30 motos and Swanny wants to be well inside the top 10 now he is starting a season fit.

Honda are doing their effort for UK youth in supporting the Wulfsport and RWJ efforts – let's hope they get their just rewards with Shaun Simpson, Scott Probert, Jason Dougan and Elliott Banks-Browne.

All of which leaves us with the native-born UK hopeful who has the greatest chance of becoming Britain's sixth world champion.

Billy MacKenzie didn't just beat the world in Spain, Japan and on the Isle of Wight last year – he devastated them. He doesn't always blow so hot but if he can put the bad days behind him then the soon-to-be 22-year-old (on the same day as Ash Kane and yours truly – but Ash is older!) has the speed and grace to put it to them all. So go do it, Billy!



David Philippaerts is yet another super-fast Italian



James Noble's looking for his first GP podium

MX1

FACTORY TEAMS

Rinaldi Yamaha
Red Bull KTM

Geboers Suzuki
De Groot Kawasaki
TM

BRITISH TEAMS

CAS Honda
Multitek Honda
RWJ Honda
Wulfsport Honda
MotoXtreme Kawasaki
Bike It/Dixon Yamaha

OTHER TEAMS

Martin Honda (I)
JTX Honda (NL)
Shineray Honda (B)
MTM Suzuki (B)
3C Suzuki (I)
Delta Suzuki (CZ)
Kurz Suzuki (D)

SVEMO Suzuki (S)
Edo Suzuki (I)
Bodo Schmidt Suzuki (D)
Sarholz KTM (D)
RFME KTM (E)
MX Shop KTM (DK)
NCS Floride Kawasaki (F)
Medei Kawasaki (I)
Eggens Kawasaki (NL)
Van Beers Yamaha (NL)

72 Stefan Everts (B), 4 Cedric Melotte (B)
5 Mickael Pichon (F), 7 Jonathan Barragan (E),
103 Sebastien Tortelli (F)
11 Steve Ramon (B), 24 Kevin Strijbos (B)
12 Tanel Leok (EW), 74 Stephen Sword (Scotland)
15 Antti Pyrhonen (SF)

2 Josh Coppins (NZ), 9 Ken De Dycker (B)
6 Pascal Leuret (F)
10 James Noble (GB)
13 Gordon Crockard (GB)
22 Mark Hucklebridge (GB)
25 Julien Bill (CH), 50 Martin Barr (GB)

8 Brian Jorgensen (DK), 27 Javier Garcia Vico (E)
17 Aigars Bobkovs (LV)
75 Marvin Van Daele (B)
14 Danny Theybers (B)
18 Alex Salvini (I)
21 Josef Dobes (CZ)
26 Lauris Freibergs (LV), 34 Kornel Nemeth (H),
35 Clement Desalle (B)
30 Marcus Norlen (S)
39 Philip Ruf (A)
Dimitri Parshin (Rus)
16 Wyatt Avis (SA)
19 Alvaro Lozano (E)
70 Jonny Lindhe (S)
29 Alexandre Rouis (F), 71 Mickael Maschio (F)
41 Claudio Federici (I), 80 Luca Cherubini (I)
77 Erik Eggens (NL), Bas Verhoeven (NL)
36 Manuel Priem (B)

MX2

FACTORY/FACORY SUPPORTED TEAMS

De Carli Yamaha (I)
Ricci Yamaha (I)

Bike It/Dixon Yamaha (GB)
Champ KTM (NL)

Silver Action KTM (I)

Sarholz KTM (D)
Molson Kawasaki (GB)

GPKR Kawasaki (B)

BRITISH TEAMS

Wulfsport Honda
RWJ Honda

OTHER TEAMS

SRS Honda (I)
NGS Honda (F)
Cadre Rouge France (F)
Martin Honda (I)
JK Yamaha (I)
PSM Casola Yamaha (F)
Van Beers Yamaha (NL)
SVEMO Yamaha (S)
JK Kawasaki (I)
TSM Kawasaki (F)
RFME KTM (E) -

Errevi KTM (I)
SVEMO KTM (S)
MX Shop KTM (DK)
Delta Suzuki (CZ)
3C Suzuki (I)

1 Antonio Cairoli (I), 18 Matteo Bonini (I)
5 Chicco Chiodi (I), 12 Kenneth Gundersen (N),
250 Davide Guarneri (I)
211 Billy MacKenzie (GB)
8 Carl Nunn (GB), 14 Marc De Reuver (NL),
16 Tyla Ratray (SA), 19 David Philippaerts (I)
10 Rui Goncalves (P), 20 Manuel Monni (I),
39 Simone Ricci (I)
15 Max Nagl (D), 27 Markus Schiffer (D)
21 Gareth Swanepoel (SA), 22 Tom Church (GB),
101 Tommy Searle (GB)
90 Sebastien Pourcel (F), 377 Christophe Pourcel (F),
41 Greg Aranda (F)

34 Shaun Simpson (GB), 35 Scott Probert (GB)
46 Jason Dougan (GB), 74 Elliott Banks-Browne (GB)

4 Patrick Caps (B), 23 Mattii Seistola (SF)
24 Pierre-Alexandre Renet (F), 25 Remy Annelot (F)
26 Benjamin Coisy (F)
73 Antoine Meo (F)
7 Luigi Seguy (F), 30 Loic Leonce (F)
9 Anthony Boissiere (F), 55 Xavier Boog (F)
17 Aigars Leok (EW)
36 Johan Carlsson (S)
11 Jeremy Tarroux (F)
28 Nicolas Aubin (F)
31 Manuel Estanis (E), 32 Carlos Campano (E),
33 Francisco Millan (E)
42 Roberto Lombrici (I), 43 Daniel Boscolo (I)
69 Jonas Wing (S)
75 Nikolaj Larsen (DK), 84 Kenneth Nielsen (DK)
37 Frantisek Smola (CZ), 44 Angelo Pellegrini (I)
40 Fabio Mossini (I)

Spain Off Road

*Four wheels makes for an
almost eejit-proof trail
riding experience - and
here's the eejit to prove it!*



NEW SENSATION!

There used to be a time when you'd need a donkey to go trekking in the Almirajara mountain range so we packed off two of ours to check out the latest thing in Spanish trail riding tours

Words and photos by Geoff Walker and Suttu

CALLS FROM DBR HQ are sometimes really good and sometimes really harsh. "Where's your copy Wakker?" is an example of harsh and "Hey Geoff, how do you fancy a six-day riding trip with Spain Off Road?" is a fine example of a really good one.

Riding holidays to Spain have been around for a good few years now but this was my first experience of one of these trips. Spain Off Road are a new company with a fresh outlook – so fresh in fact that their weapons of choice have four wheels rather than two...

This is a fact that the Sutt Dawg didn't tell me during the initial phone calls as I think he knew I might have given the trip a bit of a swerve. But, hey, we're up for anything here at DBR!

I had a few initial reservations about the trip as I had a premonition of Suttu and myself rolling around some hills on a couple of two ton farm quads with tears of boredom rolling down our chops. Just how wrong diddy wrong could I have been.

The main men behind Spain Off Road are Sean Delahunty and Greg Holder. These good old boys – ably assisted by their fine ladies Damaris and Jan – have put a riding/holiday package together that caters for just about every level of rider above the age of 25.

The guys lay on a cracking range of quads including the Polaris Trail Boss 330cc automatic and the awesome 500cc Troy Lee Designs Polaris Predator. The Predator is a serious piece of kit for advanced riders while the Trail Boss compliments the range in a very user-friendly manner.

Spain Off Road's Competa HQ is only a short journey from either Malaga or Granada airports and flights to both destinations are like Suttu – cheap and easy – so getting to the area is a doddle from most local airports around the UK and Ireland.

Sean and Greg picked us up directly from Malaga International as there were just the two of us (groups of over four get a free hire car). As we headed into the mountain range the boys enthusiastically gave us a run down of what we could expect over the next few days and the excitement was growing to get out there and ride.

My four-wheeled reservations were still with me as we headed out in the morning. My last quad experience was a good 16 years ago on a very scary 500cc two-stroke Suzuki which belonged to Lisburn's local wheelie legend 'Puff McPee'.

Unlike Puff's old Suzuki, Spain Off Road's bikes look great and I couldn't wait to claim one

of the Predators for myself to get the bars set and all sorted. When I sat on the weapon I soon realised that I didn't really have a clue on quad set up so I took some advice from the guys during our safety briefing, then we were ready to rock and roll.

As we had ridden before we were allowed to ride straight out from base but the guys can offer training at a flat track for customers who haven't ridden before. I think that's a great idea and pretty necessary as the handling characteristics of the four-wheeled weapons take a little while to adapt to.

To say Sutt and myself were a little tentative for the first part of the ride out is an understatement. I had to take things quite easy as sometimes it's best to feel your way into the bike – and this was one of those times.

The feeling for four wheels came pretty quickly and as we wound our way down off the mountain towards the coast there was a definite increase in speed and confidence. Sean and Greg regularly stopped to make sure we were handling things okay and suggested we call in at one of the motocross tracks near the coast to give us a chance to get the feel for these things in a controlled environment.

This was by far the best thing they could have done as it helped us learn how to throw the quads around which would enable us to enjoy the trails in the mountains even more.

I think I upset a few Danish lads who were down for pre-season testing on the track as it was a little moist when we turned up so they were getting smoked for a few laps by us and our extra wheels. After stuntman Suttu decided to launch himself and his extra wheels off a high drop we decided it was time to chill out so we hit the beach.

This area of Spain is amazing. You can go from deep in the mountains to the ocean in no time and after a little dip we were off to fuel up and head back into the mountains. Now this is what this trip is all about – great weather, great scenery and most of all great riding.

The kilometres reel along and the altitude reached once you're rolling is breathtaking. I was swimming in the Med and within an hour-and-a-half I was laying in four feet of pure virgin snow having ridden on just about every type of terrain I've ever experienced – and a couple of new ones.

It truly is an amazing experience and I had to stop a couple of times just to take in the views of the vast mountain range. These elements coupled with the absolute blast I was having while learning and having fun on four wheels was making day one of our adventure a

very memorable experience.

The best was still yet to come as I managed to get my revenge on the Sutt Dawg for all the times he has made me rip through water for 'the perfect shot'. We found a good size river crossing to shoot some pics and Dawg ended up with mucho agua (a lot of water) in his drawers and everywhere else – much to Greg and Sean's amusement.

With a good seven hours of riding under our belts day one was pretty much over and the hotel called. Muchos grub and sleep was required in large amounts to prepare for the rest of the trip.

Day two allowed us to ride with a couple of extra troops and this added to the experience. I found by running at different positions in the train I could watch how different riders used their four wheels. I was able to learn something from each and every rider and this added to my day.

We rode in a different direction to day one and didn't really cover any ground that we'd experienced the previous day. This is one of the great things about the area, there is so much scope and so many trails that you don't have to cover the same ground twice if you don't want to.

With the different direction came an even wider variety of terrain and the rocky uphill and downhill shoots were a real test as Dawg wouldn't give up the chase easily.

As with any mountain range the weather can be a little unpredictable at times and things got a bit chilly when we were at a high altitude. It had gone lunchtime and the Spain Off Road crew weren't in the mood for messin' around so they promptly ordered us some local mountain stew to warm our cockles. Weird stuff – nuff said!

After a speedy blat back to base another full and enjoyable day was over and the rest of the almost week-long adventure followed the pattern of new experiences, breathtaking views, friendly locals and great riding with knowledgeable and entertaining guides.

On the final day as Sutt and my bad self sat on a viewing plateau looking out across the mountains we could pick out the various trails we had ripped along. It really was a cracking and very surprising experience and one I just know I'm going to repeat...

* Thanks to everyone at Spain Off Road for a great experience and good luck with everything in '06. For more pics of Team DBR's Spanish experience check out the gallery page at www.spainoffroad.com



The Dawg lets rip!

The lowdown

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

Spain Off Road claim to be the premier quad bike off-road tour company in Spain today and as it's the only quad bike tour company we know of we can't argue – not that we'd want to of course. Company founders Greg Holder and Sean Delahunty have been living and riding off-road in the area for many years and their trail knowledge helps ensure you'll have the time of your life. With a choice of Polaris quads available to choose from there's machinery to suit everyone from raw quad novice to seasoned quad pro. And no matter what your skill level you won't fail to be amazed by the Spanish scenery.

Spain Off Road are based in Competa which nestles in the foothills of the Sierra Almijara mountain range. The town offers breathtaking scenery and stunning views of the Mediterranean coastline and beyond to Africa. Sean tells us there are only four locations on the planet where it's possible to view another continent with the naked eye and this is one of them.

It's not all about the trail riding though. Spain Off Road offer flexible, bespoke holiday packages that suit both riders and non-riders alike. As well as offering the guided trail tours Spain Off Road are also able to arrange many outdoor activities in the Competa area from walking to horse riding with pretty much everything else in-between including climbing and mountain biking.

For full information check out their website www.spainoffroad.com or call +34 952 55 37 65 or +34 951 16 13 46 where you'll find a friendly English speaking voice at the other end.

From sea and sun to
snow in 90 minutes...



The eejit proved
impossible to drown





Mmmm, a fish lolly!

Sutty's say

TANKY TRIES FOUR PLAY AND LOVES IT!

As a wily old veteran of Spanish trail riding holidays I was really looking forward to returning to the region of Andalucia to get some time in on what must be one of the best trail networks in the whole world.

Even though my last visit to the area had been muchos enjoyablos thanks to Mike Findlow and his team the pleasure I derived from my time at Spain Off Road was on an equal footing if not higher.

I was a little sceptical about the trip at first seeing as my last brush with an ATV had seen me running my own legs over with a 70cc Honda's back wheels at Southport Pleasure Beach back in the mid '80s. Of course, back then the balloon-tyred beasts had one wheel less and were somewhat less stable than most of my ex-girlfriends. Thankfully, Spain Off Road's pack of Polaris quads all have four wheels and appear to be well built and sturdy – just like most of my ex-girlfriends. That's a good thing too as the 500cc four-stroke engines pack a lot of ponies and can fairly shift along the trails.

Riding quads was a new experience for me but with a pre-ride pep-talk from four-wheeled veterans Sean and Greg I pretty much knew what to expect from the bike – erm, I mean quadricycle – on the various surfaces we encountered in the early going. This advice was pretty much invaluable so it was well worth listening to even though all I wanted to do was get out there and twist it – erm, I mean push it (the thumb-throttle).

While cruising along the trails it doesn't take you long to realise that with two extra wheels and 80-odd more kilos than your average motocross bike these beasts take a bit of man-handling. If you catch a bump or rut wrong with these bad boys you're in for a bit of a wild ride until you pull everything back in line.

Luckily the Polaris Troy Lee Predators are equipped with the best suspenders money can buy so it takes a large amount of dumbassery to get it too wrong. Saying that I did manage a slow speed rollover after cross-rutting in a snow bank but aside from that my few days spent quad riding were accident free.

Away from the trails Godfrey and I found ourselves staying in the Hotel Balcon that's situated in downtown Competa. As well as enjoying a good sized room with an excellent view of the sea, Wakker and I enjoyed the hospitality the hotel's staff offered. Unfortunately, it took me three days to figure out that Katy – the hotel receptionist – was, in fact, English and during that time I'd been talking like a dumbass to her in my finest Spanish/English so she'd be able to understand. Luckily, I eventually figured it out but by then my famous linguistic skills had kicked in and I found that if I asked Jose – the Balcon's manager – for 'dos cervezas s'il vous plait' he'd get me a pair of ice cold beers. Sweet!

As great as the local cerveza is the real great stuff out here is the riding itself. With great guides, great equipment and great trails you can't go wrong when you're in a region that's renowned for its great scenery and great weather. What more needs to be said? Quad trail riding with Spain Off Road is simply chuffing great!



Greg (left) and Sean (right) treat the team to a spot of local cuisine – sadly, the eejit (second right) proved impossible to poison!

A word of warning...

...AIRPORT ARSE-SLAPPING!

While using a budget airline may seem like a good idea when you book your flights their knock-down prices do come at a cost as we found out by flying with BMI Baby – the airline with tiny fares but massive oversize baggage charges!

Riding kit and camera equipment weighs a fair bit more than BMI Baby's 20kg baggage limit – about 30kg more when you've also got your normal everyday clothes packed – so it's worth packing light unless you want to pick up an additional £150 bill (£5 per kilo) like we did.

We suggest checking your baggage allowance with your chosen airline before you fly – some airlines actually allow you to carry more baggage while others have special guidelines for sports/safety equipment. We found the staff at BMI Baby to be most unhelpful in helping us with this situation – they seemed more concerned with trying to extract as much extra cash out of us as possible.

Of course, it is worth remembering that Spain Off Road are able to fit you out with riding kit if needs be – although you will need your own boots or other form of sturdy footwear – so it's not necessary to actually carry as much stuff as we did.



11 KIT DELANEY



12 JASON MEADS



#3 JORDAN HIND



7 JACK TAYLOR



8 DANNY HARRIS

2 JORDAN LOOMES



The CVs are in and the finalists are decided - all that remains is to pick a winner

Words and Photos by Suttly



4 JAKE CAREY



#6 JAKE BLICK



#15 TESSA HAYWARD



#11 RICHARD McDERMOT



#10 DREW GOUDY



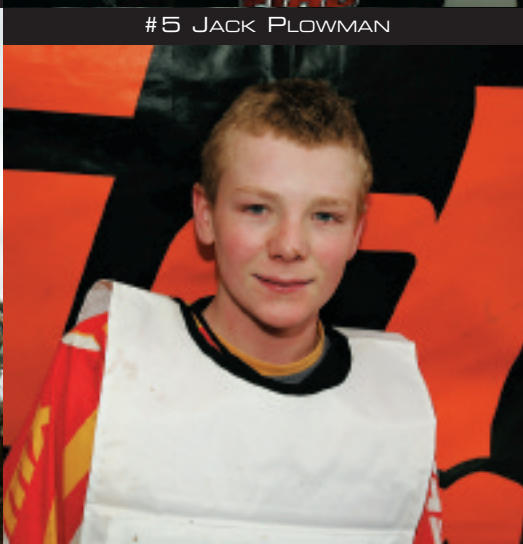
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HONDA	CRF150 B/W	2007	£3199	KAWASAKI	KX 85 S/W	2006	£1899	KAWASAKI	KX 250	2007	ALL IN STOCK	YAMAHA	YZ 250 LC	2007	£3999
HONDA	CR 125	2007	£3899	KAWASAKI	KX 250	2006	£3299	KAWASAKI	KX 250F	2007	IN STOCK	YAMAHA	WR 250F	2006	£3499
HONDA	CR 250	2007	£3999	KAWASAKI	KX 65	2007	PHONE	KAWASAKI	KX 450F	2007	IN STOCK				

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HONDA	CR250	97-06	X8 FROM £1699	KAWASAKI	KX125	99-06	X5 FROM £1799	KTM	SX 200	2004	£2399	YAMAHA	YZ250	03-05	X8 FROM £2299
HONDA	CRF250	2006	X2 FROM £2799	KAWASAKI	KX250F	04-06	X3 FROM £2399	KTM	SX350	2003	£2399	YAMAHA	YZ250F	02-05	X12 FROM £2199
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Jordan Hind makes it through to the final 15...



...and so does Jake Blick where...



...their riding talent is scrutinised by Ashley Kane, Jamie Dobb and Paul Wood

IF IMITATION truly is the sincerest form of flattery then Simon Cowell must be feeling pretty darn smug right now as motocross' version of the award-winning TV show *X Factor* has finally come to fruition in the form of, wait for it, *Ride MX Factor*!

The man behind the free-to-enter and cunningly named contest is Paul Woods – managing director of Stratford-upon-Avon's premier Yamaha dealership Ride MX. At the start of the year Paul was desperate to put something good back into the sport but he wanted to do it in a unique way – something different from the tired but universally trusted sponsorship package route – so during a bit of banter with a visiting sales rep Ride MX Factor was born.

While the trash TV show *X Factor* will take almost any Tom, Dick or Harriet from the street and then transform them into the UK's next pop sensation, Paul's idea was to take a young motocross racer aged 11-18 who already has a solid base in the sport and then try and help

them find their way to the next level.

With additional support for the ground breaking competition coming from Yamaha UK, Shift, Lazer, Berik, Oakley, FMF, EVS, Michelin, Putoline, ASV and more the lucky winner will be well set for the year – especially when you consider that rider training from ex 125cc world champion Jamie Dobb and DBR's tiny-tester Tony D Marshall all comes as part of the prize package.

Around 90 potential winners of Ride MX Factor sent their portfolios in to Paul who whittled them down to a final 15 who were each sent an invite to Midlands practice track Olympia for the Grand Final.

For the final the chosen 15 would get to strut their stuff in front of a three-man judging panel consisting of Dobber, Paul himself and Fox Europe's Ash Kane who's got a well trusted eye for spotting young up-and-coming motocross talent.

While Ash may be the man when it comes to spotting the next big thing his time keeping

skills ain't so hot. On the morning of the final Ashley's running late due to being stuck in traffic somewhere *oop naaaarth* and Dobber's running behind schedule too (it's alleged he's working his magic down at the local McDonalds Drive-thru) so the 14 finalists who've made it to the NEC circuit – all on time I might add – get to ride the track in an effort to warm themselves up in the almost sub zero conditions.

The track at Olympia is renowned globally – okay, in the West Midlands at least – for being rougher than a bear's backside so theoretically the best riders should shine through while their attitude and personality – which is equally as important as ability when it comes to winning Ride MX Factor – will come under scrutiny in the rider/family interviews later on in the day.

With the nippers going hard at it out on the track both Ash and Jamie finally drag their sorry selves through the entrance gate so we're good to go for the inaugural Ride MX Factor Grand Final.

After an initial briefing for the riders it's time for the 85cc pilots to put in some track time in front of the judges. First out for his 10 minutes of intense on-track scrutiny is Norfolk nipper Aidan Wigger. With the judges looking out for good style, control and speed Aidan doesn't disappoint and neither do Jordan Loomes, Jordan Hind, Jake Carey, Jack Plowman and Jake Blick who follow Aidan out for 10-minute sessions of their own.

But out of all the 85cc riders it's Plowman who stands out head and shoulders above the rest. The little Londoner is out on a borrowed CR85 after his own well used and abused Suzuki went pop just one day before the Ride MX Factor finals. Despite a couple of small crashes which kinda slow down his progress Jack's generally hauling plus he's got a killer style which makes him a rider well worth watching out for in the future.

Before the 125 class riders get a chance to hit the track the judges have a sit down chat with each and every 85cc rider and their families to get an idea of the racers' plans for the year, how they'd feel about racing a



Richard McDermot is the only four-popper pilot to reach the final



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Ride MX Yamaha and also to get a general idea of how good an ambassador each young athlete and their folks would be for Ride MX and Ride MX Factor's associated sponsors.

The interview stage of proceedings gives the panel plenty to ponder but at this stage of the game they're keeping their findings tightly sealed in a file marked 'Top Secret'. So without further ado it's on with the next group of riders – the 125 class.

As the bitter cold wind seems to be sapping everyone's will to live the riders are paired up to get things moving along a wee bit quicker. First out are local lad Jack Taylor and Danny Harris who are both stylishly laying down some superb lap times. Unfortunately for Danny that's not the only laying down he does as the Berkshire Bomber finds himself trapped underneath his bike after getting it very wrong over a drop off. Luckily he's pretty much okay although his peak's bust off and his elbows are leaking a little blood.

Next to put in some laps are Oxfordshire's Warren Field and the furthest travelled rider of the day, Belfast's Drew Goudy. Drew's deceptively fast around the track with a no frills style that gets the job done while Warren's all-action and aggressive style is accentuated by his tall, thin frame.

After another quick round of interviews it's time for the final four riders to strut their stuff. Sole four-popper finalist Richard McDermot and two-smoke rider Jason Meads run first in this group and they're both indecently quick. The pair throw in some of the fastest laps of the day which give the panel's already overworked noggins plenty more to ponder.

Kit Delaney and lone female finalist Tessa Hayward are the final pairing to hit the track. Tessa seems to tense up a little under the intense pressure and doesn't ride as well as



Nice style from Warren Field



Jack Taylor's on home turf



The winner! The long trip from Belfast is worth it for Drew Goudy



she had done in free practice while Kit puts in a pretty good ride although his pace isn't quite up there with that of the previous 125 riders.

After the final round of interviews the panel have a good idea of who's in with a shout of winning Ride MX Factor 2006 but with the final decision being so tough everyone's asked to put in another 10-minute session around the track to make sure the final choice is the right choice.

As the final session begins there are four out of the 14 finalists the judges have got an extra watchful eye on – Jack Plowman, Jason Meads, Jack Taylor and Drew Goudy. All of the four are pretty closely matched and during the

final session their individual merits are discussed until all three judges agree on one rider who'll take the win and the supported ride that comes with it.

While there can only be one winner the 13 runners-up don't go home empty handed as Ride MX goodie bags – which include a signed copy of Jamie Dobb's awesome book *A Year in the Life of a Motocross Racer* – are given to everyone.

Like most good things in life Ride MX Factor will be back next year so keep an eye on www.ridemxfactor.co.uk for your chance to enter the 2007 competition which promises to be even bigger and better.

And the winner is...

...ANNOUNCED RIGHT HERE!

While it would be all too easy for us to let you know who got to take home the bacon we felt it was only fair to let Paul Woods fill you in – after all, it was his gig, we just gatecrashed it for the day. Over to you Paul! "First off I'd like to say it was a really enjoyable day and I'm glad the weather held off to help make the event a great success. I was pleased that the 14 finalists made the effort to attend and the riding was very impressive.

"The winner Drew Goudy provided us with a fantastic portfolio giving us all the information we were looking for. It gave us a full insight of his past achievements that were outstanding – he's been Ulster and Irish champion and finished sixth in the BYMX nationals last year in the 85 Big Wheel class. "He also represented Ireland in the Youth MX des Nations at Metz in France and finished a creditable fourth overall. Unfortunately, at the last round of the BYMX Nationals he crashed breaking his collarbone but he's now fighting fit and has moved up to the Intermediate 125 class.

"We were very impressed that Drew and his family had made the journey from Ballyclare in Northern Ireland to show us his talent. After watching Drew ride at the Olympia circuit – that he'd never been to before – we saw he was producing consistent fast lap times and he showed really smooth style.

"After interviewing Drew and his family we could see he is truly committed to the sport and has potential to be something special. He told us that he would be competing in the BYMX Nationals and the Ulster championship for 2006 and with Ride MX being a national company I feel he would represent us well. Drew showed us true commitment as he wants to compete in the British MX championship and perhaps someday in GPs.

"We believe Drew has the qualities required to be the next up-and-coming talent. He showed us the ability to adapt to a new track and churn out good times consistently. He has his parents' support and their commitment to his racing and this was in our opinion everything he needed to win the Ride MX Factor."

A pristine Jamie Dobb leads the second moto of the '90 250GP at Gimont

TEEM SPIRIT

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

Gimont's glorious hillside circuit hosted French GPs in 1985 and '90 – and both times Saturday sunshine was replaced by Sunday storms that sadly washed away the organising club's grand prix aspirations

SEARCHING VAINLY for some information on the Dortmund SX I recently landed on the website 'Planet Motocross'. It revealed little about the German indoor event but contained instead a masterly mini-movie of motocross history that brought wet, windswept memories swirling back.

The grey, shaky footage vividly portrayed a 1990 French 250cc Grand Prix at Gimont where Italian Alessandro Puzar stormed to yet another outrageous victory in vile conditions despite some blazing British opposition.

The late Patrick Boulland was a brilliant, barmy photographer from Paris who took some of the tastiest MX snaps you've ever seen. He called himself 'The Pope' and his connections often eased the burden of being a monolingual Englishman abroad.

Five years earlier, in 1985, Patrick had kindly agreed to meet me at Toulouse airport for Gimont's first-ever French GP. I managed to miss my plane but, undaunted, Boulland returned the following day to pick up this obvious idiot.

The weather, quite beautiful during Saturday's free training, turned very nasty overnight. A filthy wet grand prix was memorably won by dashing young gladiator Jacky Vimond, intent on putting French

motocross up where it belonged. But the crowd – and the club – suffered in the awful weather.

Come 1990 both the French GP and Jacky Vimond were back in Gimont, the recently retired Jacky, alas, not to race. Fans hung homebrewed banners over the trackside fencing. They said, simply, 'Merci Jacky'.

The Pope risked meeting me again in Toulouse. This time I actually caught the plane and when I disembarked found Boulland had already befriended another English stray. Kevin Doherty, from Bath, had come to support Oxford's Mark Bennett. He had a knapsack, one of Mark's Heron Suzuki jackets and no idea where to go.

Patrick off-loaded Kevin and myself on to his kindly young protégé Christian 'Amadeus' Batteux and offered us shelter for the night on the floor of Batteux's hotel bedroom!

Once again, Gimont's glorious hillside circuit basked in dazzling Saturday sunshine. We went that evening to a reception, laid on by the Gimont Moto-Club at the imposing Chateau de Larroque. Outside, on a beautiful grassy balustrade overlooking a long mellow valley, we soaked up the splendour of a sultry continental evening and listened, mystified, to a series of mercifully brief continental speeches. The sombre Mayor of Gimont was followed by

pixie-faced little club president Monsieur Causse and our very own jury president, Albert Carter, who baffled the polite gathering by complimenting them on "their bootiful circuit!"

But, incredibly, Sunday broke dull and damp. Swollen grey clouds moved in across the horizon as poor Monsieur Causse sucked an anxious Gauloise. Heavy rain fell and, though it had stopped before the first race, his fine track had mulched into a glutinous quagmire.

British interest centred on Heron Suzuki duo Rob Herring and Mark Bennett and 18-year-old British 125 champion Jamie Dobb, the tall Derbyshireman riding his maiden 250 GP season for Honda. Bennett – a shy, strong Oxfordshire roofer – had won British 125 and 250 championship races, sported the highest elbows ever held in British motocross before Brian Jorgensen and had as his mechanic a baby-faced, hirsute Mike Forster, who now looks after Glen Phillips in Roy Emberson's Pioneer Yamaha team. Herring, the reigning British 250 champ, arrived covered in spots, the result of an unpleasant bout of chicken pox.

Multiple first lap pile-ups blocked the track and forced a rerun of race one. The restart fared scarcely any better. "I was rolling round on the first hill waiting for them to stop it again," grinned Bennett later. "But they didn't!"



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Mark Bennett beats double world champ John van den Berk in race two

But that was how the feisty Italian gypsy tore the opposition apart all year and he powered past to rack up a remarkable 11th race victory in 13 motos and five out of six GP wins en route to one of the great world title triumphs.

Dobb, once more under pressure from Herring, held off the Heron Suzuki in a nail-biting climax as Vehkonen's factory Yamaha, having diced it out all race with Bennett and van den Berk, regained fifth place from the 'Abingdon Elbows'.

Out round the track Kevin Doherty had run out of gas for his laxon having murdered the thing throughout the whole remarkable race. Three Brits finished in the top six, Dobb and Herring now lay seventh and eighth in the series (behind five world champions!) and Jamie clinched his first 250 GP podium alongside Puzar and Fanton.

But Monsieur Causse and the Gimont Moto-Club were to suffer the cruel financial consequences of their second storm-lashed grand prix and the world championship sadly never returned to their 'bootiful circuit'.



Alex Puzar was the man to beat in 1990



Jacky Vimond enjoys home support on his way to victory in 1985

Herring also went out while the amazing Alex Puzar and his Chesterfield Suzuki – advised calmly over the fence by team manager Michele Rinaldi – slewed and slammed his riotous way to victory. 'Dobber' challenged hard until the Suzuki's roost filled him in on lap four. Still third for a long time, a dogged Dobb finally, coolly, pitted for fresh goggles and rejoined the race fourth behind ex-125 world champion Pekka Vehkonen (Yamaha) but ahead of another former world champ, Dutchman John van den Berk (Chesterfield Suzuki).

A brisk wind helped dry out the circuit for race two as Jamie Dobb jumped to the front ahead of Vehkonen, Michele Fanton, Davy Strijbos, Puzar, Bennett and Herring. Mercurial 21-year-old Herring, a popular figure in France, carved his way through to second, colliding with Puzar and smashing the Italian's roll-offs en route. For several glorious laps Dobb and Robbie fought for supremacy with Bennett fifth and staving off Vehkonen and van den Berk.

Herring snatched the advantage and promptly fell, remounting fourth behind Fanton as Puzar attacked Dobb. Planet Motocross' mini biopic excitingly captures this epic struggle – especially an astonishing moment when Puzar, sideways, side saddle and on full bore, miraculously stays aboard, even in a compelling slow-motion replay!



Wild Robbie Herring flies to the front of race two – he doesn't stay there



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Steve Cox is an American moto-journo who follows the entire AMA SX/MX tour. A staffer at famed US weekly Cycle News for over four years before striking out on his own to do the freelance thing, Steve's an ex-pro motocross racer so he can ride as well as write. He knows the sport and its personalities like few others and as our US Editor provides top-level insight and features fresh from the Stateside scene...

UNSTOPPABLE!

Words and photos by STEVE COX

Winning's all that matters. If you don't think so ask Ricky Carmichael

AFTER WATCHING THE RACING IN CANADA IT SEEMED AS THOUGH RICKY CARMICHAEL COULD BE DOOMED TO A SEASON OF SECOND-PLACE FINISHES BEHIND JAMES STEWART.

SOMEHOW, THOUGH, CARMICHAEL CAME OUT SWINGING AT ANAHEIM I AND LANDED HIS FIRST WIN IN PHOENIX JUST ONE WEEK LATER. SINCE THEN HE'S MATCHED JAMES STEWART'S WIN TOTAL AND STEWART HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CAPITALISE EVEN WHEN CARMICHAEL HAS SOME BAD LUCK.

IN ST LOUIS CARMICHAEL TOOK A BRUTAL CRASH IN THE WHOOPS IN HIS HEAT RACE BUT HE JUMPED RIGHT UP AND WON HIS SEMI BEFORE A MECHANICAL FORCED HIM OUT OF THE RACE – LEAVING HIM 20TH. STEWART, HOWEVER, CRASHED LATER IN THE SAME RACE AND FINISHED 17TH.

NOW ST LOUIS WINNER CHAD REED HOLDS THE POINTS LEAD BUT IT'S FAR FROM OVER.

DBR: It looks like the simpler tracks have helped the racing this year for sure, wouldn't you say?

RC: "Yeah, I think it's definitely getting better for sure. Obviously James and myself have been putting in some good battles and Chad's riding good as well. At the same time you've got Ivan Tedesco so now we've got four guys and when Windham comes back we'll have five guys that legitimately have a great chance to win.

"That's a step in the right direction rather than just one or two guys. I'm really happy with the way the series is going, the way the tracks are going and it's going to be in these guys' best interest if we make the racing better, for sure."

DBR: After seven rounds it looks like the championship is completely wide open...

RC: "Yeah, now it is, for sure."

DBR: This is kind of new to have the points lead and then lose it like that, isn't it?

RC: "If anything I'm usually just coming from behind, like when I knocked myself out in '02. Hell, I was 25 points down until we got to Daytona and then Vuillemin didn't race but I was 25 points back. I had planned on it going

all the way to Vegas. Then he didn't race and we just went heads up after that race.

"In '97 – my first year in the outdoors – I had a 30-point lead and then when I left Mt Morris I only had a three-point lead. But then the next weekend at Budds Creek Windham's chain broke one moto and Scott Sheak's engine blew.

"It's exciting now and it's a shame what happened over the weekend but at the same time I guess it basically just came down to me and James. When I got 20th and my main guy to this point got 17th that wasn't really a bad day at the office."

DBR: Especially since the points spread is only one point per position back there – one for 20th, two for 19th etc. When you win it's 25 points and then 22 for second etc. **RC:** "Exactly."

DBR: That crash in St Louis was one of the most brutal crashes I've seen and you just got up and picked up your bike and rode off. How the hell do you do that?

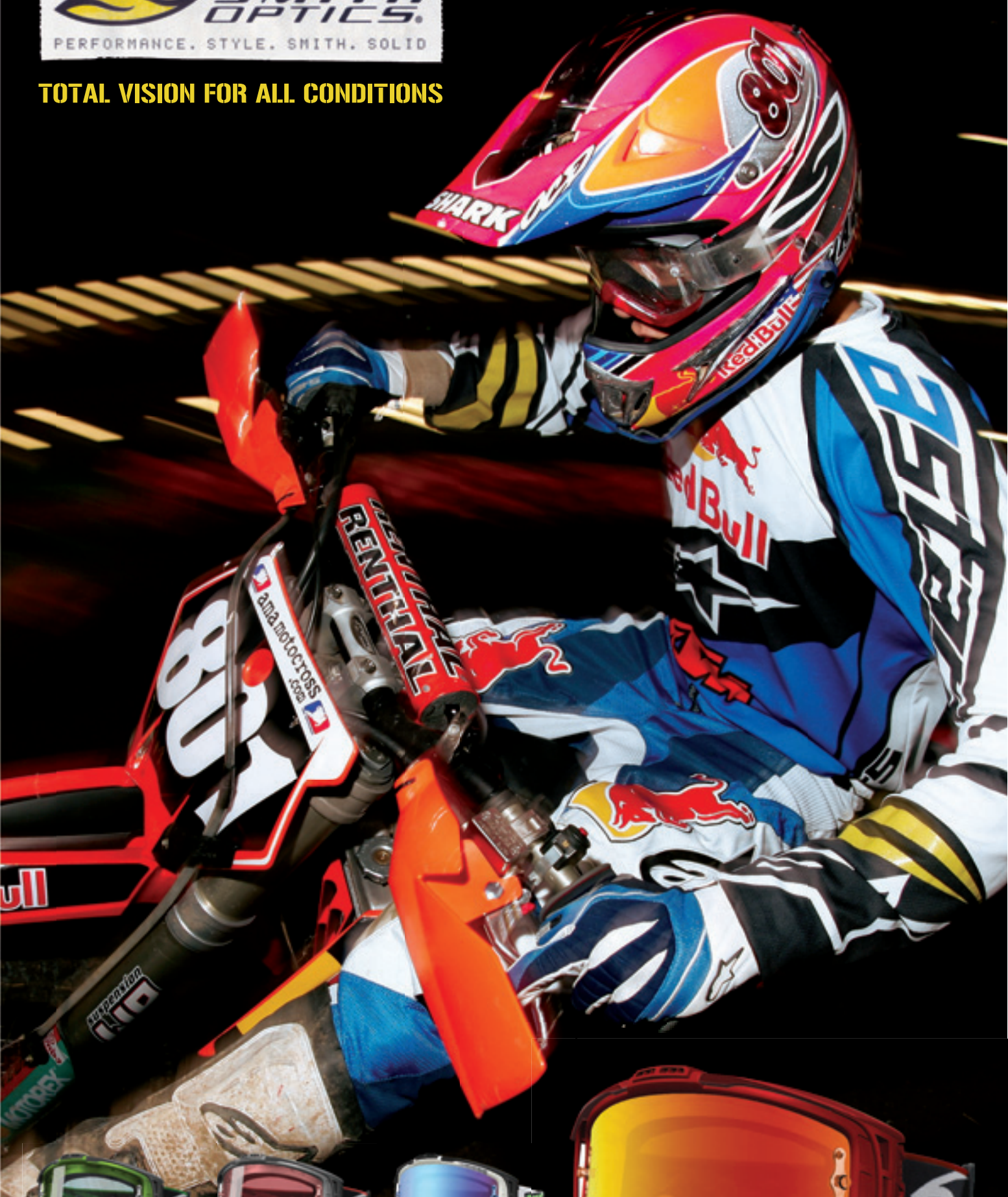
RC: "You know, I got lucky, man. I just have to give a lot of credit to Aldon Baker – my trainer – for keeping me in shape. I really have to credit him with me having



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RICKY CARMICHAEL **interview**

the strength to withstand stuff like that. Also, there was a little bit of luck but I just was trying to jump through the whoops section and when I landed I think I hit a soft spot or something and then my hand flew off.

"When my hand flew off obviously it just ejected me. If my hand didn't fly off I think maybe I would've been okay but I just slammed into the face of that whoop and I didn't have anywhere to roll off. It was just a sudden stop.

"I'm just thankful I'm walking to be honest with you. I kind of got up and shook it off. I came out, had a really good semi and then I was pumped. I'm like, 'okay we'll just see what we do here in the Main',

"Then I fell down in the first

turn in the Main and I was like, '****'. So I got up and started riding and I heard a little bit of noise by my chain area and I thought, 'maybe something's caught in between my chain and my chainguard' and then I came by the turn by the mechanics' area and I just felt my bike get really low. I knew something was wrong. Right when I went into the whoops the thing just unloaded and the spring broke in half.

"It was a freak thing. That's the second DNF I've ever had due to a part breaking or a mechanical issue in my entire professional career. So it's a shame that it happened that night – or at all – but this year is super-competitive and the championships are going to be won on your bad days.

"I was never planning on having a DNF – nobody ever does – so I'm going to have to bust my hump until Vegas now and hopefully that doesn't cost me. At the same time I can't throw stones. I've been pretty fortunate. It's just bad timing."

DBR: I noticed after the semi that you rode up onto the podium, then rode down. Do you have some sort of a foot problem or leg problem or something from the crash?

RC: "No. Everything's good. Somebody else asked me that, too. I'm 100 per cent. My limbs are good. I mean, I've blown out both of my knees so my knee braces are set up so I can't move my legs too much but everything's good otherwise."

DBR: Coming out of Canada it looked like James was going to kick your ass all year. Then we get to Anaheim and things look quite a bit different. How the hell do you just manufacture speed like that?

RC: "You know, I just watch and I've got some great people around me, as you know. Man, I don't know, I always seem to be able to step my programme up. That's all we did. From after the first round in Canada until Anaheim we just worked strictly on speed."

DBR: That must be kind of disheartening for people like James who think they have something you don't and then find out they're wrong.

RC: "It would bum me out for sure. I think I needed to step it up and at least challenge him so I did what I thought would help me and luckily it's worked so far.

"That was the disappointing thing about St Louis for



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me – I really worked on some things from San Diego and my speed was sick and I felt comfortable but I didn't really get to put it to work. That was the bummer part for me."

DBR: Should we be watching for you to be mellow for a week or two while you sort of heal the aches and pains from this crash?

RC: "Actually, we've been testing suspension and stuff this week


and some new parts so I've been busting my hump all week. There's no rest for the weary. I've got to get back on the move. When life gives you lemons, make lemonade, right?

"I mean, we work hard and we do the best we can to get faster every week so it's never really just going through the motions. I think that's why I've always done the same thing. Every time I get on that bike I try to get faster. That's why I race, you know?

"At this point too you've got to think about the fact

that since Chad won it's going to give him a little confidence and I still feel that Bubba is probably the fastest guy but I want to step it up even more to put him out of his comfort zone. So that's my goal."

DBR: In the past when James is pushed out of his comfort zone he gets flustered and makes mistakes...

RC: "Absolutely and that's my whole deal. That's what I've got to do. I've got to get better. I can't let him be comfortable. That's when he builds that confidence." 



WACKY RACES!

The supercross series seems to be rolling along as expected as the series heads east with James Stewart and Ricky Carmichael each having won three and RC holding the points lead – but at St Louis things get a little wacky... Words and photos by STEVE COX

IT ALL STARTS WHEN RICKY CARMICHAEL GOES DOWN HARD IN THE WHOOPS WHILE LEADING HIS HEAT RACE. WHEN HE HITS THE GROUND – ESSENTIALLY HEAD FIRST – HIS HELMET FACEMASK FOLDS INTO HIS CHEST BADLY BRUISING HIS STERNUM.

RUMOURS ALSO INCLUDE A BRUISED UPPER BACK AND MAYBE EVEN A LEG THAT'S INJURED IN SOME CAPACITY IN THE GET-OFF. BUT HE RETURNS FOR HIS SEMI WHICH HE EASILY WINS.

But in the Main Event, while his team-mate Ivan Tedesco grabs the early lead, Carmichael goes down in the first turn. After he gets up he reportedly cases a triple and breaks his shock spring, dropping out after only one lap. He is credited with 20th place and one point.

James Stewart is poised to take over the points lead as he moves around Ernesto Fonseca into third by lap five, chasing Chad Reed and Tedesco. Stewart makes a move around Reed near the halfway point, only for Reed to regain the position. ♦



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"At that point I was just trying to put good laps together," Reed says. "I knew the track was tough and as long as you did all of the obstacles it all came down to corner speed and getting a good rhythm through the whoops. I didn't think James was as close as he was and I came out of the last turn there on the start straight and next thing I know there's a big seven sideways in front of me."

"I kind of had to swerve around him and from then I was expecting a battle. I was looking forward to it being my turn to take it and have a good battle. I didn't see Ricky around so I knew that he was having some problems so I was just looking forward to that."

Reed takes it as a hint to get a move on and he reels in Tedesco and makes the pass for the lead on lap 11. On the same lap while battling with Tedesco for second Stewart goes down after highside on the exit of a corner and his KX450F refuses to re-start. Although Stewart is a considerable distance in front of fourth-placed Fonseca he not only loses that spot but every spot, restarting a lap down in 19th place.

With this turn of events Tedesco secures second place while Reed goes on to win his first race of the '06 season – and, more importantly, takes over the points lead.

"This was probably my most important win of my career I would say," Reed says. "I had so much pressure on me – I just felt that I was 300 pounds lighter after the chequered flag. I'm extremely happy and proud of the team for sticking by me. They never got frustrated. They probably got frustrated when I wasn't around but when I was they never got frustrated..."

As if St Louis isn't enough the bombshell of all bombshells

drops the night before the Atlanta Supercross – round eight of the 16-round AMP'D Mobile/AMA SX series. Four-time and defending AMA supercross champion Carmichael is docked 25 points for having out-of-spec fuel at the San Diego round of the series. So instead of sitting nine points behind Reed going into Atlanta, Carmichael trails Reed by 34 while Stewart sits second, 17 points behind Reed.

With the news out Reed grabs the Main Event holeshot followed closely by Tedesco, Michael Byrne, Ryan Clark and Carmichael. Stewart goes down in the first turn.

"I actually didn't go in and slide out, it really wasn't even my fault," Stewart says. "I got clipped by some other rider and that was the end of the story. I had to restart my bike and I had a few flashbacks to last week trying to start the thing. But we got it started pretty quickly and were just trying to make our way back up and see what happened."

Reed pulls away out front as Carmichael works his way through the front-runners. On lap five Carmichael moves past his team-mate Tedesco for second and on lap 11 he moves past Reed for the lead.

"I got the holeshot and was pumped about that – maybe too pumped because I didn't take advantage of it," Reed says. "I just rode tight. It was kind of weird being out front and not having to work for it so it's good to get that out of the way. I just got in behind him and followed him. I had a couple of good lines – I was jumping a few more whoops in – and I felt like I had one more shot at him and I just kind of blew it. I made a mistake with two laps to go."

Carmichael knew something happened. "He was on my tail," Carmichael says. "As the track got more worn out I think it was tougher to ride harder so obviously the gap was going to be harder to pull. I couldn't really make my mind up on that step-on/step-off and I think he was really gapping me there. I know that's one place he was getting me for sure."

"It was kind of back and forth, back and forth and he made a mistake. I don't know where because he was behind me so I just kind of cruised around the last lap-and-a-half."

With such an unexpected – and large – points lead there's no reason for Reed to push it and try and catch back up to Carmichael.

"When I made the mistake I just kind of thought that it wasn't worth throwing myself on the ground and making myself start the bike again or something like that," Reed

says. "I saw James on the other side of the track so I knew he was quite a ways behind. So three points [lost] is better than what it could be if I was to go down."

Stewart moves into third with six laps to go but is much too far behind Reed and Carmichael to have a chance at furthering his position.

"Better than 17th," Stewart says. "I thought I could get third for sure but I was so far back after the first lap that I didn't know how it was going to be. I saw Ivan and I was closing up on him toward the end and got around him."

But Carmichael's subdued in the press conference having essentially not gotten any points for his efforts as the 25 points he lost the night before the race are replaced with 25 for winning in Atlanta.

"We run an FIM fuel that's pretty much the worst gas made. Performance-wise it's not very good. We're not dealing with a two-stroke so it's not like we're trying to find horsepower. We've got plenty of that. I'm still beside myself. As competitive as the racing is getting anything can happen. You just send your gas off and it comes back and somebody tells you it fails. We've all been busted for it. It's a shame. I know with the mixture we run it doesn't even cross your mind to do it because you already know that we're at a disadvantage with the blend we run."

"I'm disappointed for the team. We all put in too much time, too much training, too much work and way too much money to basically just sit here on the sidelines and watch these two guys go at it. So it's frustrating."

"It disappoints me more for the team than it does for myself. I'm not out here chasing my first supercross title. If I was it'd be a different story and I might be a little more upset but, don't get me wrong, I'm definitely disappointed. But life goes on and we'll gear up towards outdoors and try and do it there."

"I'm sure who ever wins the title out of these two guys would rather beat me frickin' heads up. That's the way I would want it. I wouldn't want to see some dude laying down or his bike break or getting protested or getting busted for something that I don't believe we were doing anything [wrong]."

"But what's done is done and hopefully everyone can learn from this and us riders and the factories can get together. Like I said it's not fair to any of us. It wasn't fair to Chad, it wasn't fair to James and it wasn't fair to me regarding the circumstances. It's just a shame. The improvements that they're making, then they do that and now we have nothing, really. We could've had a three-man battle but..."



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SERIES STANDINGS

Supercross

1	Chad Reed	171 points (1 win)
2	James Stewart	152 (3 wins)
3	Ricky Carmichael	140 (4 wins)
4	Ivan Tedesco	126
5	Michael Byrne	118
6	Nick Wey	117
7	Ernesto Fonseca	110
8	Mike LaRocco	108
9	Travis Preston	90
10	Jeremy McGrath	67

FUEL FIASCO!

What's going on?

Before the 2003 season the AMA had to swallow some pride and sign a deal with the FIM in order to continue sanctioning the supercross series as their attempted split from Clear Channel went sour. This means the AMA had to agree to enforce the FIM's unleaded fuel regulations by the 2004 season.

At the Salt Lake City round of the championship that year Team Yamaha's Chad Reed and David Vuillemin (as well as Yamaha privateer Tyson Hadsell) were all caught with fuel that was out of spec. All three had fuel that tested to have more than three times the legal allowance of lead in it. The rule sets the limit at .005 parts of lead per litre. All three fuels tested at between .015 and .02 parts per litre.

AMA MX/SX manager Steve Whitelock seemed to have concluded that there was cheating going on. Cheating meaning that someone was intentionally attempting to gain an unfair advantage. So Whitelock dished out a 25-point penalty for each rider caught with illegal fuel. After James Stewart and Michael Byrne got dinged for the same infraction at Binghamton in 2005 they also both received the 25-point penalty commensurate with the foul. Interestingly enough, they both had similar readings of lead in their fuel – between .015 and .02 parts of lead per litre.

However, after Ricky Carmichael was found to have the same sort of readings at the San Diego stop of the tour Whitelock saw the pattern. Carmichael's fuel was tested twice and it scored a .017 and a .018 in the two tests. "I fully understand that and I fully agree [with the thought that Carmichael isn't cheating]," Whitelock says. "Any inkling in the back of my mind that Yamaha with Chad Reed, David Vuillemin and Tyson Hadsell were cheaters has totally and absolutely been erased. Any inkling in the back of my mind about Michael Byrne, Kawasaki and James Stewart has been totally erased too. I feel that the fault belongs someplace else."

But as the rules enforcer in the series the precedent had already been set. Get caught with out-of-spec fuel and

you lose 25 points. So where do we go from here?

Carmichael's appeal was initially turned away by the AMA's Steve Whitelock and Merrill Vanderslice. Vanderslice has since resigned from AMA Pro Racing and a press release came out from the AMA saying there would be an investigation into the fuel incidents. Until a conclusion is made Carmichael's 25-point penalty will be upheld.

However, depending on the findings of the inquiry who knows what can happen?

"I think the only thing I can say is that all three happen to be VP fuels at different times," Whitelock said. "And so far six riders have had this problem. The first riders to have this problem were Chad Reed, David Vuillemin and Tyson Hadsell. That was in '04. In '05 Michael Byrne and James Stewart at Budds Creek at the outdoor National and now number six is Ricky Carmichael. Strangely enough the quantity [of lead] is always about the same. It's always tried to be explained away by some contamination from an outside source. I don't think so."

Hopefully, we'll know before the entire series is in shambles. The last thing we need is Reed racing RC thinking he has a 31-point lead then having RC get his points back with only a race or two left. The sooner this can be sorted out, the better. But for now, we wait...

Lites East

1	Davi Millsaps	47 points (1 win)
2	Branden Jessemann	38
3	Chris Gosselaar	34
4	Martin Davalos	30
5	Teddy Maier	27
6	Josh Grant	25 (1 win)
7	Sean Hamblin	25
8	Robert Kiniry	25
9	Josh Hansen	23
10	Michael Blose	20

Lites West

1	Andrew Short	118 points (2 wins)
2	Grant Langston	116 (2 wins)
3	Nathan Ramsey	107 (2 wins)
4	Billy Laninovich	99
5	Mike Alessi	95
6	Ryan Villipoto	94
7	Brett Metcalfe	91
8	Paul Carpenter	78
9	Darcy Lange	55
10	Jake Weimer	52





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SLOP TIPS!

Racing in mud is something we all have to deal with at some time or other - but crud-caused DNFs can be avoided with a little forward planning

Words by Geoff Walker Photos by Ray Chuss

RACING IN the mud is something that we all encounter once or twice in a season's action and there are certain steps to take to make your day's riding a bit easier when you do encounter the dreaded wet and sticky conditions.

Stones or mud stuck in the wrong place at the wrong time means your race could well be over. The amount of crud that gets flung around is sure to get around the workings of your bike and it really does seem to get absolutely everywhere possible.

I've seen many riders prematurely end a race because of crud getting stuck in the oddest of places. This month I'm gonna give you some tips that will help with the situation but, as we all know with off-road disciplines, you can only do so much to stop the elements from costing you a moto. You only need a small amount of equipment to undertake these jobs and they only take a few minutes to complete if you're geared up for the task in hand.

Firstly you need to get yourself sorted with some low-density foam. This is available from your local dealer. If they don't have any get them to order some and if they don't order some go to a better dealer! Acerbis and MD Racing are two suppliers that I know of.

You'll need some sharp scissors (Sutty please make sure you ask a responsible adult to help you with the cutting part), a six or eight mm Allen key, T-bars, side-cutters and a selection of zip-ties.

Brake pedal

YOUR REAR brake pedal is always in the firing line as it drags through ruts and holes that can fill it with crud. The small gap between the footpeg bracket and the pedal is a favourite spot for crud to gather and mess with your controls so it's important to keep this area under control.

The best way to do this is with low-density foam and I find this to be the most secure way to fit it in place.

WALKER'S WORLD

Tip-top prep with our tip-top tech!

pic:01

pic:02

pic:03

pic:04

pic:05

pic:05a

pic:01 Remove the rear brake pivot bolt with an Allen key which will allow you access to the inside of the pedal.

pic:02 Offer up the foam to get an idea of the size you'll have to cut. Make a snip at each point and cut the foam to the shape as shown.

pic:03 The foam may be too thick to fit between the pedal and the frame or case so simply trim the foam to fit. The foam is easy to cut so just take a little time to make sure you don't lob off too much with any wayward cuts. That would be bad!

pic:04 When the foam is trimmed to the correct

shape and thickness hold it in place to locate the point to make a hole for the spring carrier to fit through. With the foam fitted this way you have a really secure fit on the foam to keep it in place in even the toughest going.

pic:05a/b Feed a zip-tie through the leading part of the foam and secure the foam to the pedal as shown then cut the tie neatly.

pic:06 Place the spring back into position and refit the clean and greased up pivot bolt before tightening the pedal securely. Make sure the operation is not affected as you don't want the pedal sticking down causing drag.

Clutch arm

pic:07 Small stones getting stuck in the clutch arm are clearly not the hottest ticket in town! Little stones get under the arm and stop the clutch from working and this can cause a whole heap of trouble. Cut a square of foam as shown making sure it's the correct thickness to fit under the arm.

pic:08 Work out the shape the foam needs to be to securely connect to both the arm and the cable outer body.

pic:09 Cut to size and feed the small cable ties through the foam and into place. Work the



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pic:06



pic:07



pic:08



pic:09



pic:010



pic:011



pic:012



pic:013



pic:014

foam into position and secure the ties, making sure there's no interference in the workings of the clutch arm when everything is in place.

Gear lever

pic:010 Aluminium framed bikes are a little more prone to the gear shifter getting jammed due to crud being trapped. Because the frames have to be overbuilt the amount of free space around some of the working parts is reduced. This causes a few problems with mud clearance and the shifter sticking problem has arisen a few times already this year.

The ally frames can actually make the problems a little worse as the stones can jam

into the softer material in tight areas easier than they would with the harder steel frames. A strategically placed block of foam will help to keep you shifting like a legend. Cut the foam to size in the shape shown.

pic:011 Place the foam under the shifter so the position of the fixing zip-ties can be worked out in advance.

pic:012 Remove the foam and push the ties through and into position before replacing the foam under the shifter and fixing it in position. Always fix the foam to the shifter and not to the frame. That would just be a crazy thing to do and no good could possibly come of it!

Under seat area

pic:013 This one can be used when there's a lot of standing water. The foam takes some of the force away as the airbox is sucking real hard when you are on the stops. If water is forced into the airbox it will eventually make its way through the air filter. Again, that's not good. Whip the seat off a bit lively.

pic:014 Each bike is different and some would not need this work as they are pretty sealed up in this area. If it isn't then cut the foam into this kind of 'U' shape.

pic:015 Make sure the foam is big enough as it



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The Tech 10 unique design takes the heavy stitching and added layer construction of the traditional motocross boot and replaces it with a one-piece, four-density, engineered low-profile bottom. Rider benefits: Dedicated protection over the different areas of the foot with differentiated flexibility - reduced dimension all around the foot, reduced weight and superior durability.



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pic:015



pic:016



pic:017



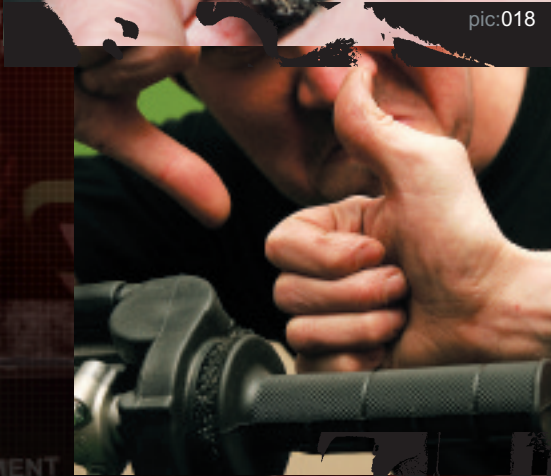
pic:018



pic:019



pic:020



needs to be a really tight fit in this area to do its job correctly. Pack the foam into place and as long as it's a tight fit you will not need to secure it into place as when you replace the seat there's nowhere for the foam to go to.

Throttle tube

YOUR THROTTLE is made up of a few moving parts and inside the housing needs to stay as clean as possible. The throttle tends to receive a lot of roost unless you're out front at all times. This quick and easy fix can help the throttle stay in better working order on race day.

pic:016 Just hold the foam up to the grip and cut a square approximately the size of the grip's flange.

pic:017 The foam will need to be cut into a thin section to fit just snug between the grip and

housing. Do not make it too thick as this will have an effect on the throttle action.

pic:018 Trim the foam into a circular shape to match the grip. Take your time on this to get it right.

pic:019 Cut a smallish hole in the middle of the foam to make it into a doughnut shape.

pic:020 Carefully slip the doughnut onto the grip (if you're fitting new grips at the same time then pop the doughnut into place before the grip) and work it over the flange until it's in place. Make sure it doesn't cause any hold ups in the throttle action.

WELL, THAT'S your mud-prep masterclass done and dusted. If it's raining outside get into the garage and get your weapon of choice prepared for filthy battle. Stay safe...



WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!

TOP TECH TIPS WIN PRIZES!

If you'd bothered to read last month's exciting instalment of Walker's World you'd have seen me fitting a Big Bang Hour Meter to Tanky's CRF fo-fiddy. These amazing little devices fit on your bike in minutes and keep a count on the amount of time your bike is running so you'll know exactly when to change your oil, check your valves or chuck in a new piston. To get your hands on a Big Bang Hour Meter you can either give Baseline a call on 01306 889911 with your credit card details or send me in your very best top tech tip. Each month I'll be picking out my favourite top tech tip and if yours is the best of the bunch I'll send you your very own Big Bang Hour Meter to fit to your weapon of choice.

Email your tips to me at geoffwalkerdb@aoi.com or send them via snail mail to **Big Bang Top Tech Tips, DBR, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancs LA4 4AG.**

HARD HARD AS AS NAILS!

It is and you have to be if you want to make it to the finish of this year's Red Bull Romaniacs

IN A sport increasingly preoccupied by extreme events – Hell's Gate, The Tough One and Last Man Standing to name just three – the daddy of all enduros may just well be the six-day celebration of S&M known as the Red Bull Romaniacs.

Running from August 13-19, the '06 event kicks off in the Romanian capital of Bucharest before riders plunge head-long into 1300km of mountain paths, horse and cart trails, gravel roads and river crossings as they race up and over the Carpathian Mountains.

Track manager for the event is well-known enduro nut Dougie MacLean. Dougie – a former ISDE manager for Team Scotland and Team England enduro squads and uncle of current WEC rider Richard Hay – has been based in Romania since last September, helping Red Bull Romaniacs' creator and organiser Martin Freinademetz find new challenges for this year's competitors.

"It's not easy like the ISDE," reckons Dougie. "There are no checkpoint timings to give you a rest, no daily special tests to wait at, no boring 100th of a second deciding results here. I believe this is a return to the six days of the '60s when riding the route was the challenge.

"It's unique but not crazy dangerous – just tough natural terrain to ride. There are no timed special tests, it's completing the whole six days course quickest that counts. And there are less officials, less rules and more riding!

"Every gear in the gearbox will be used every day, it is a pure technical enduro riding event. There are some fantastic long rides over mountain trails and areas where sixth gear can be selected and the throttle held on the stop. But this event is not about maintaining high dangerous top speeds, it is about maintaining a consistent steady forward motion in difficult terrain.

"It's not going to be easy – there are many river crossings and mountains over 2000 metres high have to be climbed and then descended."

The entry fee of 1080 Euros covers eight days half-board accommodation, racing costs and fuel which is provided every 70kms.

Classes cater for pro-standard riders as well as two-rider teams. There will also be a slightly easier 'hobby' class for two or three-rider teams and a category for quad/ATV two-rider teams.

So far no British riders have competed but that's all about to change this year when the two-man DBR dream team of Sully and Geoff Walker plan to leave a trail of destruction across the Eastern European landscape.

For more info and entry forms go to www.redbullromaniacs.com



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medical milway

Alan Milway is a qualified sports scientist who runs MX Fitness specialising in training motocross and enduro riders. For more information on how Alan can help you train go to his website www.mxfitness.co.uk or call him on 07810 827427

MATERIAL BENEFITS

In a change from his usual health and fitness subject matter, DBR's MX medic takes a look at some of the common – and less common – materials used in dirt biking

Words by Alan Milway

WE ARE surrounded by materials. From the mundane to the exotic, the choice of materials used in our bikes and kit influences their performance and also desirability. Sometimes the material used is overlooked but sometimes the sole reason for buying that bolt-on piece is

because of what it is made out of!

So why are certain materials chosen over others? Is there really any need to get the titanium footpegs over the steel ones? Here are some of the more common materials found on a MX bike and the reasons behind their use.

STEEL

This is the traditional metal of choice that's generally chosen when strength and stiffness are of greater importance than weight reduction. Steel can be hardened by heat treating and, being a relatively cheap metal, is attractive to manufacturers.

Corrosion resistance is a factor and non-stainless steels are very susceptible to rust. Alloys vary from low to high carbon additions and this alters the weldability, corrosion resistance and ductility of the metal. Hard-wearing, durable and strong, steel is ideal for a cheap, high-strength application that is easy to work with.

TITANIUM

This metal is as strong as hardened steel, very corrosion resistant and only half the weight of steel. These properties make it absolutely ideal for motocross applications. Its only disadvantage (apart from price) is that it is not very stiff so can be 'whippy' under load.

In order to get around this components are designed in stiffer sections to resist this. It also has a high melting point and this gives it scope for use in engine and exhaust products. All of these properties have led titanium to be used in surgical implants, aerospace and – because of its attractive colour – jewellery too!

Although it offers so many good properties for bike use it is very expensive and so is often omitted as standard equipment in favour of heavier, cheaper materials as a way of keeping costs down while still achieving good performance results.

If it is reducing weight you are after and budget is not a great concern this is a great way to achieve that.

CARBON FIBRE

This is a composite material formed with carbon fibres reinforcing a polymer plastic matrix. Non metallic, corrosion resistant and easy to work with it can be formed into almost any shape to give very stiff, hard-wearing products.

Fibres give the strength and can be aligned in one direction (to give stiffness one way and flex another), layered alternately to give extra strength or chopped up and injected into a mould – a much cheaper way to produce products but one that doesn't give the same strength. It is a very stiff and strong material and offers good wear and fatigue resistance.

However it is not flexible and can snap and any crack or deep scratch will greatly reduce its mechanical properties.

It is very expensive and many of its properties can be reproduced by using a common plastic at a fraction of the cost.

However, for safety products such as helmets it is ideal. Another benefit is that it has become fashionable – it does look fantastic!

MAGNESIUM

Another very low density metal, the lightest weight metal used in engineering (after lithium) is magnesium. Less than two-thirds the density of aluminium, magnesium has a strength to weight ratio 10 times that of steel.

It does burn intensely so is melted under careful conditions but, in product form, is unlikely to catch fire! It is very expensive to produce and not commonly used due to this. Found in Formula 1 engines, high-performance wheels and more, it offers that 'bling' factor where desired.

However, the casting process can lead to non-uniform colours and this has led to parts such as clutch casings becoming less popular in favour of aluminium. Cost is the major deterrent and for a part that may look very similar only the weight conscious need apply!

ALUMINIUM

One of the more common metals found on bikes, it is used for a myriad of applications and is sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'alloy' (this term simply means a non pure metal or a combination of more than one metal).

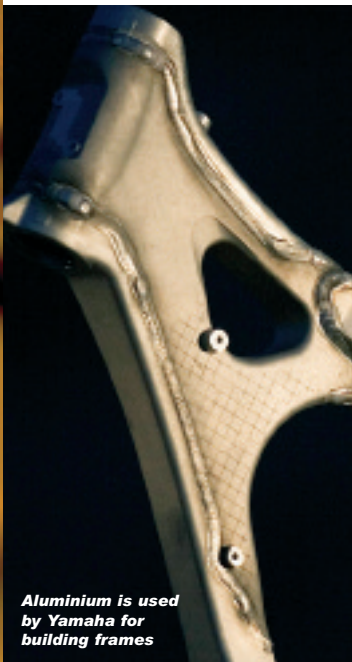


Chains – made of steel

Two Brothers Racing made this gold-plated minibike for Bubba



mx medical



Aluminium is used by Yamaha for building frames



D3o is an exciting new substance that stiffens on impact



Titanium footpegs are lighter than steel

Aluminium alloys are available and each offer different properties changing strength, ductility, hardness etc. It is low weight, corrosion resistant and easy to work with. It has a better stiffness to weight and strength to weight than steel too. However, it is soft and has relatively low hardness compared to steel. It does not have good fatigue resistance so components are made to be stiff and have little flex.

Aluminium frames are therefore stiffer to ride and give different handling compared to steel that can have flex or 'give' built into the design. It can feel harsh if overbuilt but stiffness does not necessarily mean more weight as tube diameter is increased or sections changed with little weight penalty.

One of its most attractive properties for components is that it can be given many surface finishes and is often anodized to give a wear resistant, colourful finish that does not rust.

PLASTIC

A more accurate title would be 'polymers' as you can group rubber into this. Another very common material used for both riding kit and on the bikes themselves, polymers are less stiff, less strong and less tough compared to metals so design applications usually involve low weight bearing, low wear or regularly

replaced products.

However, these properties can be advantageous as this 'give' of plastic can be designed into a product to dissipate shock and stop jarring. Often used as a cheap material option where the ultimate performance of the product is not critical, it gives a lightweight, corrosion-resistant product. It can be moulded into any shape, can be made to be very stiff or flexible and given any colour too so is a very versatile material.

D3o

This is another polymer material but with a difference. It is a flexible, low-density breathable material. However, on impact the material becomes stiff, spreading the impact force and so offers good protection for minimum weight or bulk.

It is being developed for MX use and many products from trainers to shin pads are already available. The motocross products in the pipeline are currently being developed and tested in collaboration with freestyle rider Dave Wiggins.

It's greatest attribute is that it can form protective garments that are low bulk and comfortable to wear but still offer very good protection benefits.

Cost will be a factor due to it being a recent

release and a patented product and we are still waiting on its arrival into the sport but when it does finally land it could change the way we look at protection.

LEATHER

It is amazing that a completely natural material still offers almost unrivalled properties – even against highly engineered man-made alternatives – but leather does!

Soft and flexible, it can be made into garments and offers great heat resistance, water resistance and does not corrode. It is still one of the best choice for products that need to offer protection and comfort. It is interesting to see that it still finds its way into MX gear as it offers levels of wear resistance and durability not matched by polymer equivalents.

The big drawback to it is the cost and this limits its use against cheaper man-made polymers that can give similar properties.

GOLD

Okay, so this isn't the first choice of material to make anything performance related out of due to it being soft and very, very expensive! However, if you are good enough on a MX bike, wear #7 and are sponsored by Two Brothers Racing you too can have a gold-plated bike like James Stewart.

This page: Gravity-defying stuff from Clarky and the 300 Gasser
Opposite: The 200 has got shedloads of grunt



COSMETICALLY, THIS year the new Gassers haven't changed a great deal. The graphics are pretty plain and simple and look quite classy whether you go for the smaller capacity yellow models or the bigger red or blue machines (note – the 300's only available in red). For me they're the best looking bikes on the market.

Looking at the bikes there doesn't appear to be a great deal of difference from last year – they've just tweaked bits here and there. All five bikes in the range – that's 125, 200, 250, 280

and 300 – use the same AJP brakes, four-pot on the front and two-pot on the back, which work very well.

The main difference (okay, apart from the capacities) is that the two smaller models have steel front forks and the three bigger ones have aluminium forks. Obviously, the aluminium forks are a bit lighter but both types do the business without any problems at all.

One of the biggest plus points for me with the Gassers is just how easy they are to work

on. For instance, if you want to get to the airbox it's just one screw out and if you want to take the airbox off it's a case of undoing four screws and then unhooking it from the back of the carb. Like I say, very easy to work on and very well designed.

All the kids are having to use 125s now and this has got to be a good thing as it will make them better riders in the long run. It means they have to really work the bike to get up big steps rather than just relying on the extra



CLASS GAS!

With a five-bike range running from the youth-friendly 125 up to the super-grunt of the 300, Gas Gas have got something for everyone for '06...

Words by Dan Clark Photos by Suttty

power you get with a larger capacity. And it appears that Gas Gas have worked hard on their '06 125 to really appeal to the younger riders.

The Gasser is one of the best-selling 125s on the market – the kids certainly seem to find the look of the bike appealing and it's also one of the lightest. Starting in first gear it's clear just how much bottom-end power this bike's got – I'm 12-and-a-half stone and it pulls me with no problems. One of the best things about the 125

is how cleanly it revs all the way through the range. And when you want to get it singing on the top-end it will rev its arse off and fire up virtually anything.

Go up through the gears and it still pulls along. Second's fine although in third it starts to struggle a little bit with someone my weight but certainly with a little schoolboy on board it will fly up most stuff. The 125 and 200 have the Sachs rear shock which works really well combined with the Marzocchi front forks – the

suspension absorbs everything without springing you off anything.

The 200 is always a sort of an in-between kind of bike which people seem to be a little bit scared to try because they reckon it won't have enough power to get up some of the bigger stuff. But the truth is that lots of riders would benefit from riding this size of bike. It carried me around quite happily and has the power to get up stuff but it doesn't try and pull out of your hands and doesn't spin out. It's the

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**The 280's aimed at
top-flight riders**



perfect machine for beginners or maybe an older clubman rider. It's a great little bike – more people should ride it.

The 250 comes in either red or blue and looks very classy. Brakes are the same as on the 125 and 200 and work incredibly well. Little touches like the back brake lever that's easy to get a toe on while still being tucked away show that Gas Gas have put a lot of thought into their bikes. They also come with the oversized bars as standard which are a great touch.

With the 250 we're moving up into the

territory of A Class riders and probably most clubman riders as well. It's not too aggressive but there's plenty of power for some of the bigger sections. If you're not 100 per cent confident in firing up the big stuff this is definitely the bike in the Gas Gas range for you.

It has the new fully adjustable aluminium front forks which are meant to be a little bit lighter and work a little bit better plus the Ohlins rear shock which works incredibly well. Going through the power range it's like the rest of the Gassers and revs very cleanly all the way

through which I'm very impressed with. Another quality it shares with the rest of the '06 Gassers is that you can get yourself into trouble and, with the bikes being so light, it's easier to pull yourself out.

The 280cc Gasser is possibly the top of the range bike for the big boys who ride the British championship and perhaps the trials rider with the larger frame [I think the word you're looking for is fat – SL]. This thing is a weapon and in the wrong hands you can do more harm than good so you've got to be a good rider. ▶



The 250 Gas Gas has got enough usable power to carry a heavy load up and over all sorts of stuff...

Along for the ride

A FEET-UP FEAST

Words by Lawless

While Clarky had the serious task of testing the Gassers, I seized the chance of a sneaky day out of the office and came along – quite literally – for the ride (plus the traditional on-expenses Little Chef slap-up breakfast).

"Have a go on this kid," grinned Shirty Jnr, thrusting the handlebars of the 200 in my direction. "You'll like it, it's yellow – just like a Majesty!"

And he was right on two scores – it is yellow like a Majesty and I did like it. A lot! According to Clarky and Shirty the 200 isn't exactly the most popular capacity for trials bikes – it kind of falls into the no-man's land between the obligatory 125 for nippers and the more macho 250cc-upwards school of thinking.

Tipping the scales at 15 stone (plus an Olympic breakfast), I'm not exactly the target audience for the 200 but after a bit of trial and error I found the right gear for the parts of Hawk's Nest I dared venture into and was amazed at just how strong the motor pulls.

Tons of bottom-end meant that it had enough oomph on the grippy rocks to get me up and over stuff I'd never have thought possible.

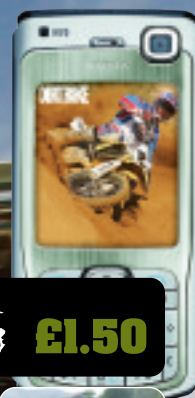
That said, once Clarky had finished with the 250 and I got a chance to swing my leg across it that's where I stayed for the rest of the day. The extra snap you get with the additional 75cc (72.4cc to be precise) makes a big difference when you're built like the pork product-munching pro that I am – although it's all good n' usable power rather than an arm-stretching hit. It had the responsive bottom-end punch needed to get the front wheel up and then carry my cargo (two sausages, a pair of eggs, a couple of rashers of bacon, beans, mushrooms, fried potatoes, hash browns and black pudding plus two rounds of toast) over some fair-sized steps and on one particularly snotty third gear climb it found grip all the way to the top.

• A big thanks to Shirty Jnr for providing the bikes, Rob Fairburn at Feridax for the Airoh helmet and super-comfy (and waterproof) Sidi boots, the gang at BOR for the XC-Ting trials kit and the short-order cook at Adlington Little Chef for the rider fuel!

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It's got the same suspension as the 250 and is very well made.

The Gassers still use a linkage system at the back which, although involving a bit more maintenance, for me works every bit as well as bikes without a rear linkage.

The 300 I think is mainly aimed at older riders who just want something with plenty of grunt. It has got a lot of power – and you'd think it would be more powerful than the 280 off the bottom – but it seems to be a little bit more docile. You could just jump on this, put it in a higher gear and plod along using the bottom-end power. But just like the 280, in the wrong hands if you rev it too much you could get yourself into a lot of trouble.



The little 125 is a formidable trials tool – in the right hands

STOPS

TXT 125 PRO

Capacity: 124.8cc
Bore and stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm
Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension: Sachs
Front brake: 185mm disc
Rear brake: 150mm disc
Carburettor: Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox: Six-speed
Wheelbase: 1330mm
Dry weight: 68kg
Retail price: £3,117.74

TXT 200 PRO

Capacity: 175.3cc
Bore and stroke: 64mm x 54.5mm
Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension: Sachs
Front brake: 185mm disc
Rear brake: 150mm disc
Carburettor: Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox: Six-speed
Wheelbase: 1330mm
Dry weight: 68kg
Retail price: £3,205.95

TXT 250 PRO

Capacity: 247.7cc
Bore and stroke: 72.5mm x 60mm
Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension: Ohlins
Front brake: 185mm disc
Rear brake: 150mm disc
Carburettor: Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox: Six-speed
Wheelbase: 1330mm
Dry weight: 68kg
Retail price: £3,529.39

TXT 280 PRO

Capacity: 272.2cc
Bore and stroke: 76mm x 60mm
Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension: Ohlins
Front brake: 185mm disc
Rear brake: 150mm disc
Carburettor: Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox: Six-speed
Wheelbase: 1330mm
Dry weight: 68kg
Retail price: £3,588.20

TXT 300 PRO

Capacity: 294.1cc
Bore and stroke: 79mm x 60mm
Front suspension: 40mm Marzocchi
Rear suspension: Ohlins
Front brake: 185mm disc
Rear brake: 150mm disc
Carburettor: Dell'Orto PHBL26BS
Gearbox: Six-speed
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Mapped out

INTELLIGENT IGNITION

Contrary to popular belief (yes, you Lawless) the little switch on the throttle side of the bars with the sunshine and raincloud symbols doesn't turn the headlight on or off. It's actually the ignition map switch which alters the way the power comes in – wait for it Einstein – in wet or dry conditions.

To make the most of this clever little feature you have to be fully committed as it only works when you've got it on full chat. So if you're hammering up a slippery climb and it's on wet mode it doesn't deliver the power quite as quickly as it would on dry mode which, in theory, should stop you spinning to a halt. Or, if you're the editor of DBR, help you see where you're going!



BIRD HUNT!

Aussie ace Craig Anderson is back home and on a mission – to shoot down the Kiwis who've been dominating Down Under

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

CRAIG ANDERSON is back where he started! But Chad Reed's 28-year-old cousin, an 11-time Australian champ, is home for a purpose – to give the country a native national champ again after years of Kiwi rule!

"Those Kiwis have definitely been kicking ass those last few years. And it's the same in Australia as it is everywhere else. It's great to see top guys from other countries but everybody wants to see their own guys winning.

"Honda even had Cody Cooper winning in the Lites but they want an Australian with the #1 plate and it was sort of happening for a while last year. I ended up missing the SX title by a point after starting out pretty average.

"We had been in contact for a while but the deal with Australian Honda was finalised pretty late so I didn't get bikes until two weeks before the first round of the supercross and I hadn't ridden a 250 two-stroke for more than a year. I came on strong to win the last three rounds but it was just too late. One more round and I might have won.

"And I was leading the outdoor series, then I had a small crash when I was out training and it just came at the wrong time. I broke three toes, snapped the end off. You can miss one race and it can make the difference but I missed three. I was only out for a month and our series is so strung out that we sometimes have a month between races but it just happened that we had back-to-back races the weekend after I got hurt."

Ando is no stranger to Europe having ridden German SX on and off for nearly a decade.

"I've always enjoyed racing here [in Germany], even if I always missed out on the car. But Chad didn't win that either so I'm in good company. I won Dortmund one year but that was the last year when they had the car for the series and I got pipped in that.

"They are good warm-up races for us and the European winter months are always free of races back home. And it's good racing, good people and good money. It's just too cold! How can you sit there in shirt sleeves?"

For two years – '03/'04 – Ando also chased the dream in the States before deciding to return home to Oz. "I just didn't have an awesome ride in America anymore. I was on a privateer team and when you're racing against the top guys you need good equipment. What I had available just wasn't good enough.

"The first year I was with Yamaha of Troy. I finished seventh in the outdoor with the win at Southwick and third at Steel City but I had got hurt for the SX. And that's not enough in the tough business world of AMA pro motocross and I lost my ride right at the last minute. That makes it tough to find another good ride because the teams are full. I got the deal on Honda for the second year right at the last minute.

"That was with Team Motorsport Outlet Honda. Two weeks before the series I crashed while I was testing with Race Tech and separated the AC joint in my shoulder. I was 20th in the SX and 15th in the outdoor. I had a good mechanic and the team was enthusiastic but they were a new team and they just couldn't afford all of the special equipment. It's really tough if you don't have top material.

"When you get a top ride over there you have to put in the effort to keep it. A lot of the difference is the suspension. You need good equipment so that the bike will handle well. And the big teams get the best suspension. The smaller teams can buy it but they have to be able to afford it and have the will to want to go and buy it. We had a good deal with Race Tech and they tried hard the whole time but to try to compete against the million dollar teams is tough.

"I still miss the racing – it was good fun – but I don't miss the rest. All of the paperwork, green cards, the whole way of life. I don't think Chad will stay there when he's finished racing either.

"I tried my heart out the whole year but it didn't happen, then Honda Australia came up with a pretty good deal and I had to ask myself why I was beating my head against a brick wall

in the States when I could be at home, enjoying life, getting results and earning money."

So what sort of money are we talking?

"I got \$275,000 at Yamaha of Troy and at Motorsport Outlet I was on \$80,000. The market is good now in Australia, there are a lot more people getting into dirt bike riding. It's nothing like US but the offer from Australian Honda was a better overall deal. I knew I could win in Australia so I would end up earning more – to get 10th as top privateer in America you can get \$2000, in Australia you can get \$5000 for winning."

So how is the sport Down Under right now?

"After Chad's success in the States Australia is at the point where it should be going mainstream – going to the next level – but no-one's doing it and the SX tracks in Oz are even smaller than here. We actually have one round at Melbourne on the centre court of the Rod Laver Arena. That is ridiculously small. Sydney is our biggest indoor and that is smaller than Dortmund.

"There are plenty of bigger stadiums in Australia but the promoter wants to run the entire series during the winter. I know everybody thinks the sun shines 12 months a year in Australia but it rains quite a lot in the winter and he doesn't want to go to an outdoor stadium and take a risk. He's just happy to stay indoors where he's earning good money and doesn't have to use a lot of dirt.

"And as a result SX is getting old school now, even the crowds are dropping off. Melbourne used to get 10,000 but last year it was only a quarter full and nobody wants to listen to the riders, we're just the guys who have to ride round.

"The sport owes a debt to the promoter who brought SX to Australia 25 years ago but it has been stale for 10 years now. If he's not prepared to go to the next level we need someone else who is. They did it with V8 Supercars. It was nothing for years but then Avesco took it and now it's huge. Hopefully I'll see the day when MX goes the same way."



V-force!

In a market where single-cylinder steeds rule the roost, Aprilia have broken the mould with their radical V-twin enduro and supermoto models. But are they actually any good? We fly out to Sicily to find out...

Words by Tony Marshall Photos by Aprilia

WHEN I got the call to see if I was interested in flying out to Sicily to ride the new V-twin Aprilias I knew it was going to be a test with a difference.

For starters, while there's nothing new about V-twin engines as soon as you bolt one into an off-road chassis it becomes radical. Then there was the range of bikes available to test.

Aprilia were launching their 450 and 550cc enduro and supermoto machines on the Italian island. I really wanted to get to grips with their motocrosser but, as this isn't available yet, I figured the enduro and SM bikes were the next best thing and should provide at the very least an idea of how a V-twin could potentially perform on a motocross track.

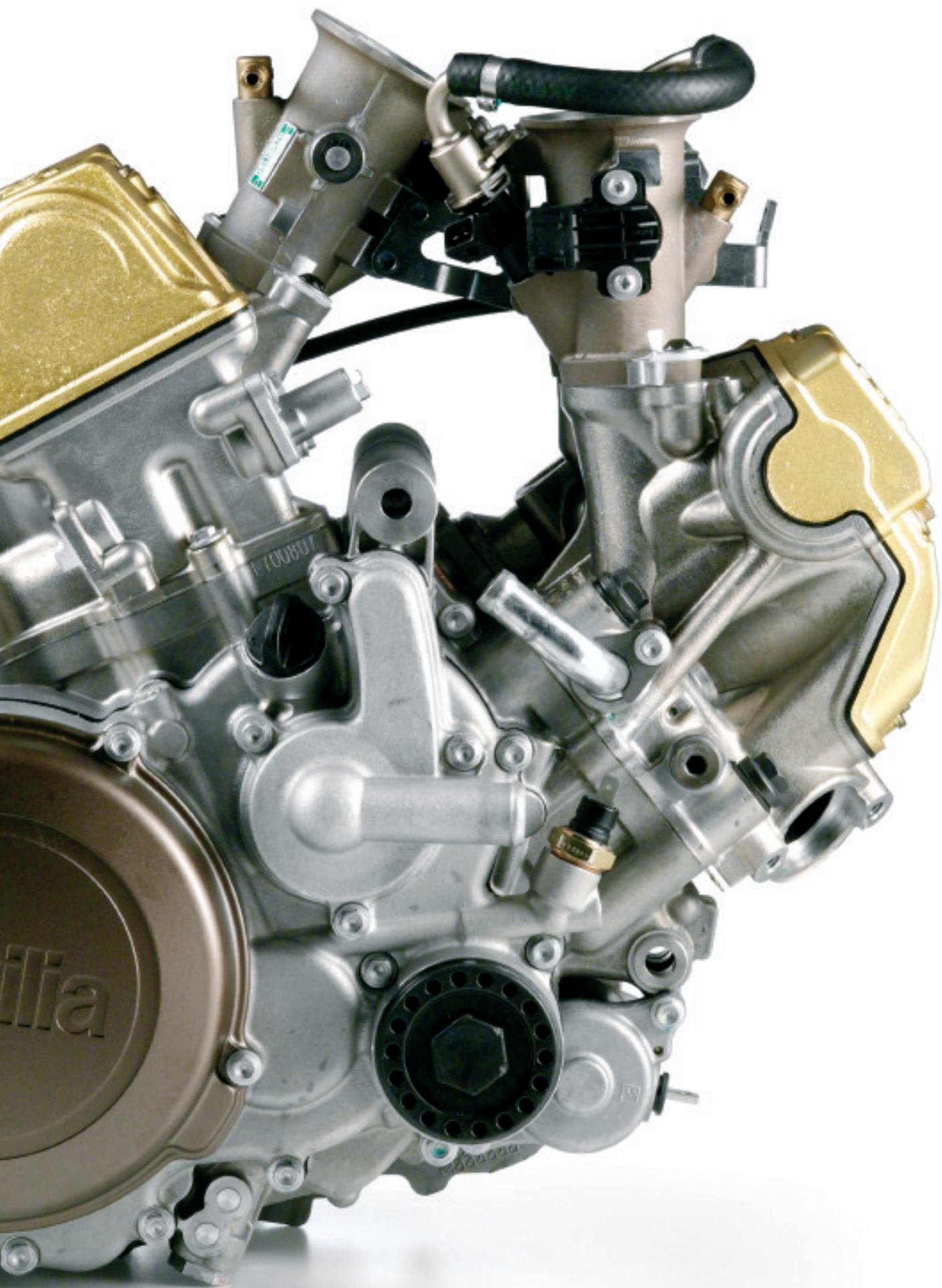
Because of class and capacity changes in modern motocross anything over 450cc is becoming redundant so when they wheeled out the enduro bikes I knew which one I was most interested in. But because of the way the test was set up we had to jump between the 450 and the 550 which I have to admit wasn't ideal

when it came to getting a feel for the bikes.

The motor on the 450 felt a little under-powered but this could be down to the fact I kept having to hop back on the 550 which certainly did have a lot of power. In fact, the 550 was a bit of an animal on the tighter stuff and on some of the slower sections it was hard to bring the power in smoothly while the 450 was a lot tamer and easier to ride. So it's hard to tell whether the 450 really is lacking in the power department or if it just feels that way in comparison with the 550.

Where both bikes really do score highly is with throttle response which was amazing. If anything the throttle could be a little too responsive for an enduro bike and it was hard to sometimes stop the rear wheel spinning, especially coming out of turns. It felt like they're running a lighter flywheel to compensate for the V-twin engine – but this is not based on any scientific fact, just my gut feeling. The fuel injection also works great – no doubt about it. If it had a conventional carb on it I'd





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say the jetting was spot on!

The bottom-end on both bikes was good – probably more suited to MX than enduro because the power came in a little bit like flicking a switch. Mid-range was good as well although it did seem to tail off a little at the top but, to be honest, enduro bikes are a little tamer than what you'd expect from a motocross machine.

Obviously, I'm a short-arse so if I was racing the Aprilia competitively I'd want to lower the rear end. But I wouldn't want to do this just because of my size – I feel it would be beneficial for the bike, especially when it comes to turning. The reason for this is I couldn't seem to set the bike up into turns and the front end wanted to push away badly.

It was more noticeable on the slower turns rather than the high-speed stuff – I'm guessing this is because when you're on the gas the back end sits lower and helps balance the bike up. I was getting it around the slow turns but it was a struggle. Even when there was a berm I struggled to turn and at the end of the test I was knackered because of the physical effort I had to put in.

My size doesn't help but there is definitely room for improvement with the settings. Given a few hours to play around with the settings I reckon we could have sorted it but the rear end did feel higher than most bikes I've ridden.

To be fair, the 450 didn't feel as bad as the 550 in turns, probably because it's got a lighter motor. If I was riding enduros I'd definitely go for

the 450 every time.

Before the test my biggest concern with the V-twin was down to weight but, to be honest, the 450 didn't feel any heavier than other 450s I've ridden. The biggest plus with the V-twin is the way it tackles the environmental problems the sport is facing. It's noticeably quieter and the fuel injection should make it more efficient which can only be a good thing.

The gearboxes on both bikes were a little bit notchy but I'd definitely give them the benefit of the doubt because new boxes sometimes take a bit of bedding in. And with Aprilia being primarily a road bike manufacturer I found that it was certainly easier to change gear using the clutch rather than crashing up and down through the box as you would with



Slide rule?

TEARING UP THE TARMAC

Maybe it's down to Aprilia's background with road bikes but for me the bikes were more impressive in supermoto trim than they were when set up for enduro. For SM they use different wheels, beefier forks, bigger brakes, a fatter swingarm and different settings on the rear shock and these changes work real well on the Tarmac.

My confidence grew every lap on the supermoto machines – the riding position feels a little more geared for its discipline than the enduro bike was. The bikes were lower but the tyres were just standard road rubber and the front end felt like it wanted to push away a few times which gave me a couple of scary moments. I'd have loved to have slapped a set of racing slicks on and seen how they would handle. The 450 felt a little under-powered but that could be for the same reason that the enduro machine felt under-powered – basically I had to jump onto it from the 550 – but I genuinely enjoyed the SM aspect of the test on both bikes. Most riders could jump on one and have a good feel for it straight away.





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RXV 450

Capacity: 449cc
Bore and stroke: 76mm x 49.5mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Front suspension: 45mm USD
Front brake: 270mm disc
Rear brake: 240mm disc
Seat height: 996mm
Wheelbase: 1495mm

RXV550

Capacity: 549cc
Bore and stroke: 80mm x 55mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Front suspension: 45mm USD
Front brake: 270mm disc
Rear brake: 240mm disc
Seat height: 996mm
Wheelbase: 1495mm



SXV450

Capacity: 449cc
Bore and stroke: 76mm x 49.5mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Front suspension: 48mm USD
Front brake: 320mm disc
Rear brake: 240mm disc
Seat height: 918mm
Wheelbase: 1495mm

SXV550

Capacity: 549cc
Bore and stroke: 80mm x 55mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Front suspension: 48mm USD
Front brake: 320mm disc
Rear brake: 240mm disc
Seat height: 918mm
Wheelbase: 1495mm



most other off-road bikes.

The clutches had no fade throughout the duration of the test and the brakes were very, very good but that's something you'd expect from a new bike these days anyway.

Starting is an issue with most four-strokes but I never had any problems at all with the electric boot. Saying that, they did have one of the batteries going on one of the bikes which was a big problem because there's no auxiliary kickstart.

The riding position with both bikes was fine apart from the too high rear end. Although I was aware that the bikes – compared to conventional off-road machines – are a slightly strange shape they are very comfortable. I didn't get my boots hooked up on the plastics and the controls are all easy to reach without sticking out, bar positioning and bend felt pretty good and so did the footpeg positioning. It's

clear Aprilia have given the design of the bike a lot of thought. Saying that, I wouldn't want to have to wash one after a day in the mud!

The 450 seemed a very competitive enduro bike and I'm looking forward to testing the MXer when it eventually comes out. Whether they'll bother using the 550 engine in a MX bike I don't know.

Obviously, they will have to make some changes for the MX model. First up is it needs a kickstart and the gear changes will have to be smoother as most MX riders are quite lazy when it comes to using the clutch to change gear. But I do think they're heading in the right direction and from what I heard at the test they seem to have got the budget to develop it.

They're not that far away considering it's their first attempt – a few small changes could result in some big changes if you know what I mean.



Another race, another
holeshot for Charlie – but
'05 was another season
ruined by injury





© Ray Chuss

profile

Charlie's going for glory in '06 on a 450F

BORN TO FIGHT!

Despite a career blighted by the kind of injuries that would have seen many riders hang up their boots, AMCA ace Charlie Hollis is still eyeing up the big prize...

Words and photos by Mike Wood

HAVING BEEN rebuilt almost as often as a bike owned by Sutt, 26-year-old AMCA star Charlie Hollis is hoping that 2006 will be the season for winning titles – not suffering injury.

Competing since 1985, Charlie has rubbed plastic with – and beaten – riders who have gone on to become GP regulars. But, due to a injury list which could earn him a starring role in the BBC drama *Casualty*, a major national title still incredibly eludes him.

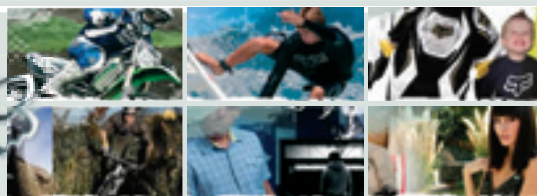
During the late days of his youth racing career Charlie was an official Kawasaki Team Green rider. With team-mates Billy MacKenzie on the KX100 and Rikki Priest racing in the 125cc Brit champs, Team Green set the motocross world on fire. Hollis was to eventually finish second behind Mark Jones in both the ACU and BSMA championships. And at the end of the 1996 season he made his adult debut at a Shell Advance event at Farleigh Castle.

Switching to ride a 125cc Honda for

Motocross World, Charlie entered the 1997 125cc ACU British MX series. At the first round at Canada Heights he got a great holeshot in the opening moto but by the end of his championship debut he had slipped back to 17th place, totally gutted by the result.

With his preparation and training unchanged since his youth racing days, Charlie was now competing in 30-minute motos with world class riders who were faster on their last lap than they had been on their first. His whole outlook needed to be far more professional but with his dad losing interest after being involved for 20 years in the sport and Charlie studying for A levels, pressure was mounting. By the middle of the season he was driving himself to races, looking after his own bikes and still getting – by his own admission – “****” results. It was time to have a rest from motocross, sort out his head and regain that lost motivation.

Motivation was certainly not a problem



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in his early riding days as, at the tender age of just three, he climbed aboard a PW50. Learning to ride at a local quarry near Chipping Campden along with older brother Andy, young Charlie was out practising just about every weekend. After eight months on the PW50 Charlie's dad purchased a Honda CR50. With no automatic classes at youth races he needed to learn how to ride a motocross bike with gears.

Just one year later Charlie made his racing debut during a Cotswold Youth MCC event at Meon Hill. When he went to collect his trophy at the end of the day the commentator greeted him by saying he was the fastest rider down the big hill – although Charlie admits with a grin this wasn't intentional. "I kept pulling the clutch lever in, mistaking it for the brake. But it only happened for two laps as I suffered a massive crash just one circuit later!"

Progressing to a KX60 in the Junior class, Charlie was now making rapid progress and regularly winning both Cotswold and Coventry club races. And, at the age of six, he competed at his first national event where he won all six motos.

However, after the joy of victory his fortunes suffered a massive downturn just one week later when he crashed and broke his leg. Unaware of the extent of his injury he competed in the BSMA semi-finals just a week later and won before a hospital visit the following day brought him back down to earth. After an operation and lots of complications it would be another three years before Charlie got back on a bike.

Totally against his mum's wishes, Charlie finally got back in action aboard a KX80. Now aged 10 he returned to racing with the Cotswold club and gradually found his form. With his brother having quit the racing scene Charlie's dad invested in two new Kawasakis and decided the time was right for a serious crack at the nationals. With backing from Dirtwheels Racing he eventually finished fourth in the BSMA Finals and fifth in the ACU Finals. In both classes Hollis won races – beating the likes of Stephen Sword, Karl Harris and Roy Wells.

In 1992 he moved into the Inter Open class on a KX100. Again supported by Dirtwheels, Charlie became far more consistent and won the YSMA Supernational, finished fourth in both the BSMA and ACU Finals and third in the BSMA Champions of Champions behind Carl Nunn and Ryan Voase. So impressive were his

efforts that Allmech Kawasaki offered him a ride on a KX125. With his birthday being in March, Charlie moved up into the Seniors class one year early to partner team-mate Finbarr Kneafsey.

After adapting to the extra power of the KX125, Hollis was soon achieving fifth and sixth placed national finishes against the likes of Nunn, Voase, Mark Hucklebridge, Barry Morris, Tim Heasman and Leon Woodford. But halfway through the season he became seriously ill with glandular fever.

Following his illness the Hollis jinx struck again in 1994 when he had a massive crash with David Willet, suffering a knee injury which required surgery. One year later, fit and motivated again, Charlie began his final season in the Seniors class riding a KX125 for Elbe Kawasaki.

This was the year when Hollis announced his arrival in the big time, finishing second in both the ACU and BSMA National championships – and but for losing his points at the first BSMA round for using illegal fuel he would instead have been crowned champion.

Looking back on his time in the youth ranks, Charlie doesn't hesitate when asked which of his rivals he felt looked most likely to make the grade. "Swordy was awesome all the way through the youth ranks and someone I really looked up to while Billy Mac was the speed machine but he also knew how to crash – normally in a big way! Both lads had massive ability and potential."

Charlie is also clear on his personal best moment from his youth career. "Representing my country in the European youth championship in Holland alongside Swordy and Mark Jones made me feel very proud. As a team we finished third in what was a high quality event."

A four-month break at the end of 1997 enabled Charlie to concentrate on passing his A level exams before he started a career in purchasing for the Rover Group. He also gained a superb new sponsor in MJ Wright, a stonemason business, before returning to action with fifth in a Dutch SX that was won by a 15-year-old Steve Ramon.

However, just as he was getting back to race fitness he sustained a broken collarbone and was sidelined for another three months. Charlie returned to join the Avon Sporting Club in the AMCA but in the final club event of the season at Nympsfield a crash resulted in a badly broken right wrist.

After a five-month lay-off his preparation for the 1999 season had been severely hampered. His doctors actually advised him to rest for a full 12 months but he was keen to get stuck into the AMCA 125cc championship aboard a Ride MX Yamaha. After the opening three rounds his wrist was getting weaker, forcing him to eventually accept medical advice and stop racing yet again to prevent further damage.

Making another comeback on a YZ250, racing was a part-time affair for Charlie during 2000 and 2001 with outings at local ACU club events and the British SX championship. But even with a radically reduced schedule there was more pain on its way and while practising on his track at home he miscalculated a double and shattered his right ankle. With a mortgage to pay and more time off work needed it could easily have signalled the end of MX for Charlie.

But at the end of 2002 his best friend Danny Ludgate persuaded him to go practising and just one week later Charlie was back in business after buying a second-hand 250cc Honda. Competing on this bike during 2003, he remarkably finished a fantastic second overall in the AMCA championship behind legend Gary Davies. In the six championship rounds he never finished outside the top four.

With his enthusiasm rekindled, Charlie's

return to form was rewarded with a berth aboard a Ride MX 450cc Yamaha in the 2004 AMCA Open class championship. After training hard throughout the winter he warmed up for the new season by competing again in the British SX championship. And after a heavy landing from a triple at the NEC he broke his wrist – although, remarkably, he still won the Clubman Open final on the night ahead of long jump ace Jason Rennie.

After a visit to hospital later that evening he was back in plaster for eight weeks. Returning to action just before the opening AMCA championship round, Hollis ended the season second in the Open class title race – an agonising seven points behind eventual winner James Russell.

So, would 2005 be the year that Charlie at last gained his just reward for years of pain and hard work? Well, after starting the season by being crowned the British Clubman SX champion and also finishing eighth in the Pro class he was naturally full of confidence for the challenge ahead. And after winning the second round of the AMCA Open class championship at Caister and taking the series lead he then took pole in qualifying at Matchams.

But after a poor start in the opening moto he fell at turn one, was struck by a following rider and was soon on his way to hospital with a badly broken left leg. All the hard work and preparation had again failed to deliver as Charlie was forced to watch the rest of the season from the sidelines.

Following this latest setback Charlie has now had the plates and pins removed from his smashed leg and, by the time you read this, will be preparing for his assault on the 2006 season armed with a new CAS 450F Honda.

And his goals for the year are? "My current and only ambition is to win a motocross championship. All the way through my youth and adult career I have finished second. There are no prizes for being runner-up and people only remember the name on the championship trophy!"





RULE BRI

Wayne Braybrook takes an early lead before Knighter finds a way past

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Fast Eddy snatches third on the final hill of the event

It's as easy as one, two, three for the Brits at the '06 Camel Hell's Gate race as Blighty's best fill the podium once again

Words and photos by Jonty Edmunds



Trials star Graham Jarvis is impressive for fifth

BRITAIN'S BEST extreme enduro riders David Knight, Wayne Braybrook and Paul Edmondson show the bulldog spirit to fill the podium at the '06 Camel Hell's Gate race in Italy.

With David and Wayne finishing first and second 12 months ago, the event is once again dominated by British riders as the pair are joined on the podium by Fast Eddy with trials ace Graham Jarvis not too far behind in fifth.

The four Brits pass through the morning qualifying enduro without too many problems with Knighter and Braybrook placing first and second only 16 seconds apart after three cross-country special tests. They're followed home by Edmondson who places fifth with Jarvis, competing in his first ever timecard enduro, 11th. In doing so all four pass through into the main Hell's Gate race.

"The morning race went well for me," explains Knighter. "It was a bit scary in places because the ground was frozen but apart from a few crashes it was easy enough. I just wanted to get through the race in one piece without damaging my bike – but I didn't do that."

Despite his hopes of making it through the three-hour event without problems, David aggravates an old ankle injury which results in the Manxman limping to the start of the Hell's Gate race. Lining up alongside Braybrook, DK soon forgets about the pain from his injured ankle and takes an early lead.

But it's not long before Braybrook takes to the front as Knighter struggles for grip as he negotiates his way up the first of many rocky river beds. Behind them is a gaggle of French and Italian riders with Edmondson and Jarvis in the thick of things.

Knowing that Knighter's not too far behind him the multi-talented trials and enduro rider finds himself in trouble as he nears the end of

the first circuit. After bending his gear lever and then getting rope wrapped around his rear wheel Wayne's time at the front lasts just one lap.

"I knew Knighter wasn't too far behind but I had opened up a decent little lead," explains Wayne. "I lost all my advantage when I bent my gear lever and had to stop to get the rope out of my wheel. Then I had to change my gear lever at the end of the lap and that's when Knighter took off."

In the position he knows best – first – Knighter seizes his chance and after a quick splash and dash sets off at the head of the field. Upping his pace to ensure he gets as far ahead of his rivals as he can it's pretty much plain sailing for the KTM factory rider and he starts to edge ahead.

At the end of the second lap Knighter's lead has grown to over five minutes and as he completes his third lap the gap is up to nearer 15 minutes. As darkness starts to fall Knighter is seemingly heading towards yet another Hell's Gate victory.

But the race takes a challenging twist for the Manxman during the final stages of the last lap as he fails to get his lights to work. Struggling on with limited visibility DK knows that the end of the race is just a few miles away but as dusk turns into night he slows to little more than walking pace.

"I couldn't believe it," comments David. "I couldn't see a thing and really found it tough. I knew I had a good lead over Wayne but I knew he would be catching me. There was no way I wasn't gonna get the eight grand though."

Battling against the demanding and in places hazardous Italian terrain, Knighter decides enough is enough with just a few kilometres to go and pinches a spectator's

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Hell's Gate

DK, flanked by Wayne and Fast Eddy, quickly regretted the sarong

helmet which is fitted with a light. "I had to do something," says Knight, "it was almost pitch black and I was gonna get hurt otherwise."

Arriving at the base of the final Hell's Peak with his lead over Braybrook reduced to just three-and-a-half minutes, Knight is soon stood on the podium and relieved to have finished.

"That was certainly tougher than the last two years," explains the reigning Enduro 3 world champ having made it a hat-trick of Hell's Gate wins. "The track was difficult, the ice made it even harder and then damaging my lights made it even harder again."

With Knighter home and dry Braybrook is the next rider to appear, closer to DK than any rider has ever managed to get. After losing sight of the Manxman, Wayne stretches his advantage over the third-placed rider during laps three and four and after fighting his way up the final hill finishes as runner-up for the second year running.

"It was disappointing having to stop and change my gear lever but that's how it goes with these types of races," admits Wayne. "After that I just pushed on while making sure that I didn't do anything daft. If I'd known that David had problems then I would have tried to have caught him but it would have been hard to catch and pass him. I'm really pleased with the way the race went and finishing as runner-up again is great."

While there's just a few minutes between David and Wayne at the finish, 15 minutes pass before Paul Edmondson arrives at the end of the three-hour ordeal. The fourth rider to arrive at the bottom of the final hill having passed and pulled away from Graham Jarvis mid-way through the race, Eddy passes French rider Gregory Eyries within sight of the finish as the Yamaha-mounted trials ace makes a mess of his first attempt at Hell's Peak.

"I got past Eyries on lap three but then I had

to stop at the end of that lap for fuel and he passed me back again," recalls Eddy. "I tried as best I could to catch him but I had nothing left, I was exhausted. When I saw him coming back down the final hill I just went for it. Once I was on the hill ahead of him there was no way he could pass me. It was such a hard race but finishing on the podium makes it all worthwhile."

Next to finish is Sherco's Graham Jarvis. Quietly going about things in his own steady way, Grimbo has a fairly uneventful race and makes it four British finishers.

"I just wanted to stay out of trouble during

the race and do my own thing," explains Jarvis, "and that's what I managed to do. I got off line a few times which wasted energy and cost me some time but I enjoyed the race. Riding an enduro bike across rocks is very different to riding a trials bike so I learnt a lot."

With most riders heading back to the start area one more competitor manages to get to the top of Hell's Peak – Dakar racer David Casteu from France. Finding riding an enduro bike very different to a rally bike, the KTM-mounted rider makes it home as the sixth and final finisher.

Results

CAMEL HELL'S GATE RACE

1 David Knight KTM	4 laps
2 Wayne Braybrook Honda	+3.30 minutes
3 Paul Edmondson Honda	+15.30 minutes
4 Gregory Eyries Yamaha	+1 minute
5 Graham Jarvis Sherco	+13 minutes
6 David Casteu KTM	+6 minutes



Knighter completes his hat-trick of Hell's Gate wins

*Knighter's build up to the
WEC continues with
victory in Italy*



FIGHT KNIGHT!

DK comes out swinging at the '06 Genoa International Indoor Enduro and cleans up in front of a sell-out crowd

Words and photos by Jonty Edmunds

WITH THE start of the '06 WEC just around the corner, reigning Enduro 3 world champion David Knight dominates the Genoa International Indoor Enduro.

Passing effortlessly through his qualifying and semi-final races, in the final DK meets a mixture of seasoned enduro competitors and enthusiastic Italian hot shots – all hoping to get one over the AMA Endurocross champion.

But David has none of it and the race is as good as won before most riders are over the startgate. A full bike length ahead just metres from the start, Knighter veers across the path of his competitors to arrive at the first turn two bike lengths clear of the pack. Just three corners later Knighter is alone out front and heading to victory.

"The race couldn't have gone better for me," explains the factory KTM rider. "I learned in

Vegas that if you get a good jump out of the gate you have to cut across in front of the other riders – Ryno did it to me so I guess I learned the hard way. Once I got through the first few corners I got my head down and opened up a good lead.

"I could see the riders behind me so I knew how far ahead I was. I rode at a steady pace up to about lap five and then I eased off and just made sure I didn't make any mistakes. It's always good to win races but winning this race with the start of the WEC not too far away is great. I know it'll be hard to better last season but winning here is a great start."

Making his indoor enduro debut in Genoa is Euan McConnell who rides the factory 450 TM he will race in this year's world championship. Despite showing a good turn of speed the tough transition from stoker to thumper – coupled with several sizeable get-offs – results in Euan watching the final.

"Riding a new bike for the first time at an indoor event isn't ideal but I learned a lot and really enjoyed myself," reckons the battered Scot. "On the laps I didn't make any mistakes I felt good. The problem was that I made too many mistakes."

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David Knight is the man to beat at the '06 BEC opener while Fast Eddy and Chris Hockey take Enduro 2 and Enduro 1 class honours

Words and photo by Jonty Edmunds

FACTORY KTM rider David Knight dominates the opening round of the '06 British Enduro Championship, the one-day Diss MCC organised Brandon Park Enduro, finishing close to one minute ahead of Honda-mounted Paul Edmondson with TM's Jake Stapleton in third.

One of the toughest BEC events in years, the Brandon Park event sees all championship class riders faced with five laps of a punishing, whooped out, 25-mile course. And with check times tighter than a seized shock bolt just eight riders finish without penalties.

"It was probably the toughest BEC event I've ever ridden in," reckons Knighter having comfortably topped each of the four timed special tests and been the quickest rider through the 20-mile tight check. "It's amazing how rough the test and the going got. I felt really good, I reckon it's about the best I've ever ridden in Britain."

With DK showing exactly why he's currently the world's fastest enduro rider, Enduro 2 class riders Edmondson, Stapleton, Euan McConnell and Si Wakely scrap for position behind him with Edmondson eventually finishing as overall runner-up and topping the Enduro 2 class.

"Things started slowly for me on the first test," admits Edmondson, "but then I get better as the day went on. Jake wasn't making things easy for me but it was great to really have to fight to win the class."

For Stapleton it was a case of what could have been. Faster than Eddy on the opening test, on his second run through the demanding sandy special stage he clips a tree stump and is forced to ride half the test with just one foot peg. After beating Edmondson on the third test a slightly below par fourth and final test sees him finish third overall and runner-up in the E2 class.

Behind Stapleton Euan McConnell gets to grips with his 450cc TM and just manages to finish ahead of E2 class newcomer Si Wakely. Si shows that despite being a newbie he looks to be a threat at the coming rounds. Sixth overall is Wayne Braybrook who, like several riders, takes a few too many soil samples to keep him from finishing higher in the results.

Joining Knighter and Edmondson as a class winner is Husqvarna's Chris Hockey. Although not the fastest rider on the special tests, Chris finishes as just one of two E1 class riders clean on time. "It's been a great day for me," explains Chris. "I knew that the tight check would decide the results and not the special test so I gave it everything. I had a great run through the check. I'm well happy to have won."

Results

BEC - ROUND ONE

1	David Knight	525 KTM
2	Paul Edmondson	250 Honda
3	Jake Stapleton	250 TM
4	Euan McConnell	450 TM
5	Simon Wakely	250 Honda
6	Wayne Braybrook	250 Honda
7	Chris Hockey	250 Husqvarna
8	Richard Hay	125 KTM
9	Edward Jones	125 KTM
10	Tim Forman	250 Kawasaki

First blood!



Insert standard David
Knight wins again
caption here!

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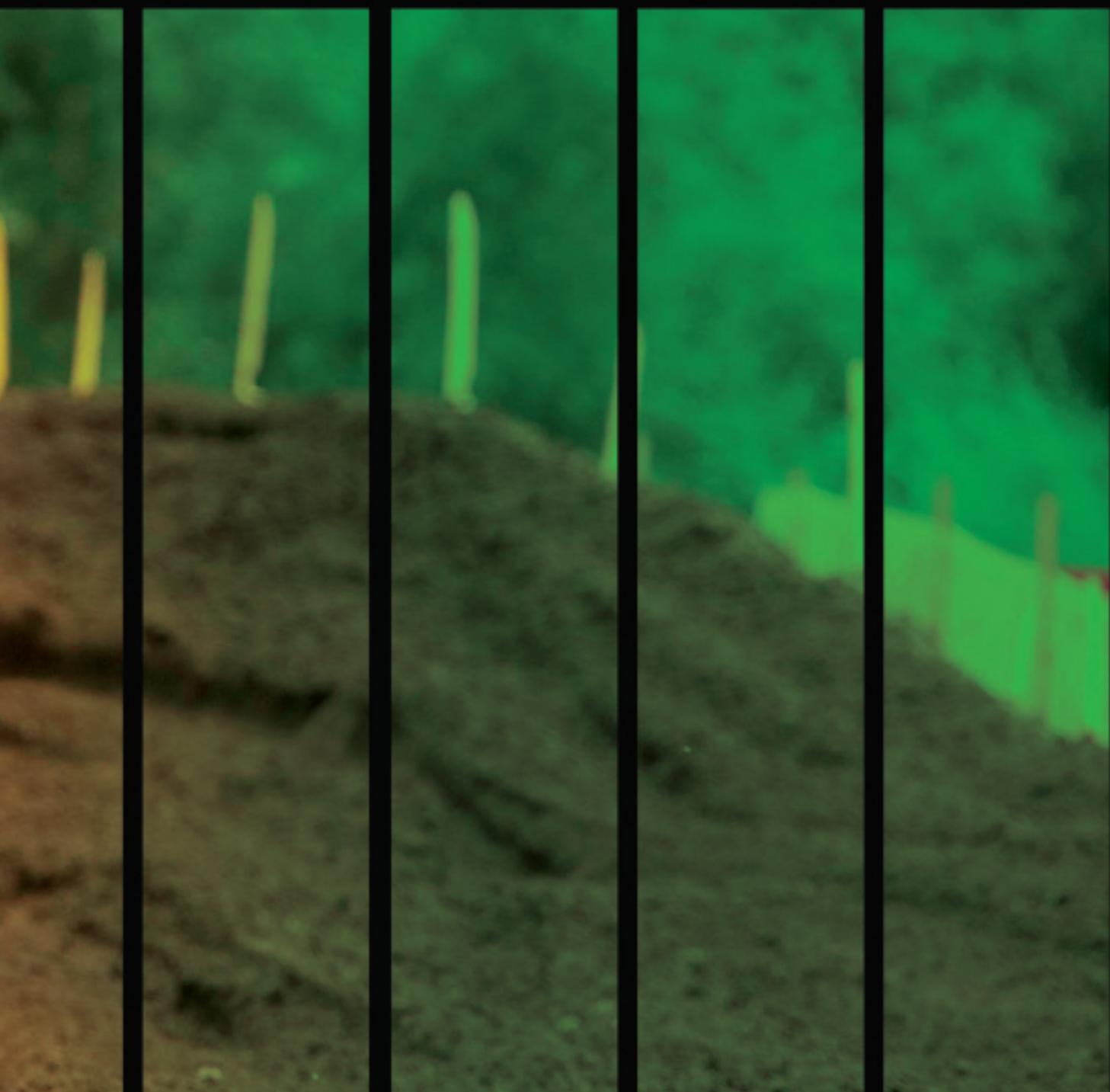
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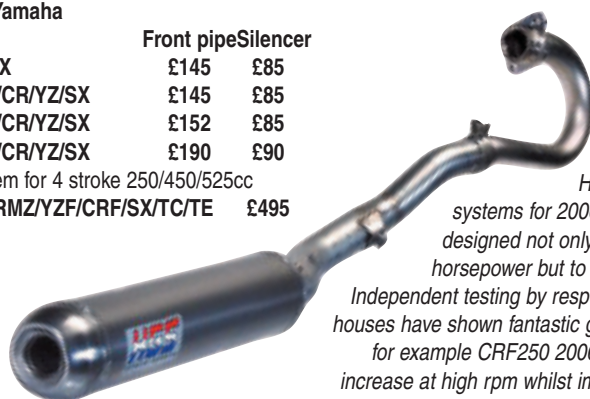
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BRITISH MASTERS SERIES KICKS OFF AT MATCHAMS PARK

It's been months since the last major outdoor national motocross event but at last we're here in the cold, wet conditions of Matchams Park in Hampshire for the first round of the British Masters Championship.

Great news for the nippers this year is that CTi, Lazer and Morris Oils are giving away prizes which is real cool and with four GP circuits to race at it could turn out to be the best series so far.

The conditions at Matchams on the Saturday make for tough going for the 65cc riders but Sunday is the worst I've ever seen so hats off to all who took part. Just a suggestion to the organisers – let the 65s hit the track first when it's a bit smoother as these little guys are racing on a super gnarly circuit even the pros are struggling with.

Ben Howell looks like he's going to achieve the season's first maximum but his last race doesn't go to plan so Adam Sterry takes his opportunity and romps home for a final race win and overall victory. Adam also goes away as rider of the weekend and for his trouble wins a brand spanking new Lazer helmet. Liam Garland just pips Ben into second with Connor Clark fourth.

The small-wheeled 85 class this year could be the one to watch and even at this early

stage there are three separate race winners. Race one goes to Jamie McCanney, race two is Luke Hawkins' and in the final race Daniel Hutchinson actually pushes his bike across the line for the win – nice one Daniel.

These guys will battle all year but Daniel comes away with the silverware this time out with some cool riding in real tough conditions. Jack Rowe – who doesn't drop out of the top three all weekend – races to second overall and Luke comes home in third with yet another consistent ride.

The rider of the weekend honour – plus a new Lazer helmet – goes to Daniel for his never-say-die attitude.

The lads and lasses in the big-wheel group put on a great show for the dripping wet fans that turn up and, as in the SW85s, we have three separate race winners in Mel Pocock, Scot James and Daniel Arnold so it's close to say the least.

And it's Daniel who manages to find enough horsepower in the slippery mud and gain the first round overall this time around. Joe Gregory is a big surprise for me – he looked comfortable and fast and will surely win races this year. Joe finishes second in a super tough group of riders with Jamie McCanney's bigger brother Daniel picking up third.

Rider of the weekend in this class goes to Amber Saunders for finishing in 16th place and giving the boys a good race – well done Amber,

a cool Lazer helmet is in the post.

Alan Keet steals the show in the Youth 125s, ripping to two decisive race wins in tough conditions. The races between Alan and Steven Clarke are awesome – if one makes a mistake the other capitalises and races to victory. It's early in the season but you can see that Alan and Steven will be fighting tooth and nail for all championship titles.

Aaron Smith shows that even in such wet conditions the 125cc machines still have a chance – Aaron doesn't stop trying all day and finishes third and first 125 home. Lewis King puts in consistent rides in all three races and when the hardpack tracks arrive watch out for the flying Kawasaki.

There are no big prizes this time around for rider of the weekend but if I had to choose then Keety would get it for his heroics in the pro races. He finishes second to Billy MacKenzie in the first, beating established GP and British championship contenders in the process. Keety, you win a raychuss.com sticker and – believe me – they're rare!

What is nice to see is the big team set-ups for the youth riders. Pioneer Yamaha with their big new yellow and white rig and PAR Honda/KRM impress with their bling bling set-up – only one is missing and that was Team Green Kawasaki so come on guys, join the party and get all your riders together under one roof.

The next event is Culham on March 18/19.



Alan Keet is in awesome form at Matchams



Adam Sterry's last race win earns him the overall verdict in the 65s



Mel Pocock gets a faceful of Joe Gregory's roost - there's a lot of it around at Matchams



Keety nails a monster holeshot in front of the Youth 125 pack



MYBESTTRACE

This month's My Best Race comes from BSMA high-flyer Dexter Marks. Over to you Dexter...

"It happened at Landrake Moto Park down in Devon, I was racing at the BSMA semis and it was definitely my best day's racing.

"It was the second race of the day for my senior group. I managed to get a great start in second place. Jason Dowling took the lead and I was chasing him hard – I followed Jason for a few laps and when the time was right I made my move and I went flying past with Michael Williams on my tail. It was a good competitive race and I managed to cross the line first for an awesome victory.

"That weekend I felt good and I took three out of the four races – I was pumped."

EURODATES

Some of you guys may want to take a trip across the Channel for a change of scenery. There are lots of races happening on the continent in 2006 and here are a few of the best ones to take a look at.

The Honest Youth International is being held in Holland this year and always has a sprinkling of UK talent on show – details can be found at www.honest.nl or www.msvnov.nl

The World Mini Trophy in Belgium is a mega event and details of this can be found at www.worldminitrophy.com

Other youth meetings include the Venray International in July (www.mccvenray.nl), ONK Supercross International on October 28/29 (email msvschijndel@home.nl) and the Lierop International two-dayer in October and November which is run on the famous GP circuit at Lommel (www.maclierop.nl).

Tired of the UK scene? Then cross the Channel...



CHRIS WRATTEN



AGE: 15
BIKE: YZ125
YEARS RACING: 5
KIT: ALPINESTARS/HANSON RACING
NUMBER OF TROPHIES: 54
TITLES: 0
BROKEN BONES: 2
TRUCK/VAN: RS MOTORHOME

ALEC CAREFOOT



AGE: 9
BIKE: KTM 65SX
YEARS RACING: 2
KIT: ALPINESTARS
NUMBER OF TROPHIES: 36
TITLES: 1
BROKEN BONES: 0
TRUCK/VAN: CAR AND BIKE RACK

MTFTOUR

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to ride at Millsaps Training Facility? Well now's your chance as MTF and their team of trainers, fitness coaches, nutrition experts and support staff are hitting our shores for two weeks in September.

The Ultimate in Motocross Training is where your skills will be assessed by the best team of MX trainers on the planet including Colleen Millsaps, mother of AMA SX superstar Davi.

It's not just one day but a whole two weeks of expert guidance and advice. The dates will be the week before the Motocross des Nations at Winchester and the week after.

With spaces limited please contact me on **07773 609994** (email media@raychuss.com) or Richard Clarke on **07973 613396** for more information.

DEARJOHN

I had a great letter recently from 14-year-old John Hancock who currently lives in Portugal. John and his family are moving back to the UK in 2006 and would like to find out about how to join clubs and where are all the best practice tracks are.

So for John and everyone else who would like more information, here's a list of websites to take a peek at which should keep you amused for hours.

www.dirtbikerider.com
www.bsma-motocross.co.uk
www.acu.org.uk
www.amca.uk.com
www.raychuss.com
www.bymx.org.uk
www.tmxnews.co.uk



BACKINTHEDAY

After such a bad month for Lewis Gregory and his team with seven bikes being stolen we thought we'd cheer him up and let him tell us about his favourite back in the day memory. Over to you Lewis...

"My fondest memory of when I was racing as a nipper (which isn't that long ago – Chussy) has got to be in 2000 when I did a Euro 85cc round at a track called San Severino in Italy.

"For some reason we were supporting the 125 GP guys. I remember in the first race I was running third behind some Italian guy called Cairoli, I was chasing him hard but made a mistake and hit the hard Italian dirt and believe me it hurt. I dusted myself off and got back on their pace and felt good all weekend.

"In race two I ended up third with Cairoli second and Tanel Leok first so I was well pleased with my performance and we all had a great time in Italy."

TEAMWORK

Words and photos by Martin Newman

The Archway Project is a busy and highly successful youth project based in Thamesmead, south London, for young people in the Greenwich and Bexleyheath boroughs.

Set up over 20 years ago as a youth project to keep young people off the streets and away from crime it quickly evolved into one of the first off-road motorbike projects. Activities at the project range from maintaining, repairing and – most importantly – riding a fleet of off-road motorbikes to cooking for group members!

It's true to say that the Archway paved the way for many similar and equally successful clubs to be set up all over Southern England and three or four times a year they all meet for a big youth enduro with different projects taking turns with the organising duties.

Streatley Hills motocross circuit is the venue for the first youth enduro of 2006 and, despite the terrible weather, 22 three-rider teams are entered. Each team shares a bike in a hare and hounds race with a trials section that each rider has to attempt with as few dabs as possible!

The original target amount of laps is 21 but this is soon reduced to 18 after torrential rain

leaves the track completely bogged out. But the conditions don't seem to make a difference to the riders who notch up lap after lap on bikes ranging from modern Yamaha TTR 125s and Honda XR110s to not-so-modern Kawasaki KMXs and a Suzuki TS185!

The one low-note of the day is a nasty crash by Paul Gilding from TRAX in Oxfordshire. After jumping a tabletop he lands with his front wheel turned and is thrown from his bike. Despite his protests he's air-lifted to the local hospital with a suspected broken collarbone.

After a break for lunch everyone's back out on the track again and it's not long before we see some brilliant riding through the woods and some spectacular jumps over the tabletops. But with time coming to an end and some very dark clouds looming it's time to finish the racing on the track – but that doesn't mean the day's competition is over just yet!

Teams still have to do the mechanical test that involves all members working together. In this case that means running to their bikes, removing the front wheel, running up the pits and around a cone, putting the wheel back on and then pushing the bike the length of the pits to the finish line.



Bikes range from TTR
Yams to an ancient
Suzuki TS185



Heavy rain makes track
conditions challenging
for competitors

RAY'S RIBTICKLER!

Just remind me never to park this close to a track which is a tad damp to say the least... It's not something you do twice!



Georges and Seb
have already
forged a strong
relationship

Georges
Jobe



back passage

GEORGES JOBE WAS CONTRACTED BY THE KTM FACTORY IN THE AUTUMN AS RIDER LIAISON OFFICER. WE TALKED TO THE FIVE-TIME WORLD CHAMPION IN MANTOVA TO FIND OUT HOW THE ROLE – A NEW ONE FOR MOTOCROSS – WAS PANNING OUT.

Words and photo by Alex Hodgkinson

"Part of my job is to co-ordinate and liaise between the riders and the engineers. It is not so much a problem of language difficulties – the KTM team is very international but everyone speaks English – but rather of communicating a specific feeling or request.

"It is often difficult in any language to find exactly the right words to convey what one means and a third party who understands both jobs and is standing back from a conversation can often see where the potential problem lies in the interpretation and explanation of ideas, wishes and feelings.

"But my job is much more than that. I try to give the riders the benefit of my experience from more than 25 years in the sport, racing GPs for two decades and still riding today. Every rider suffers from stress in the heat of the moment and I am there to take care of any needs and requests which can help reduce the stress, making sure the riders are happy with what they test.

"I have been to France to work with both Mickael and Sebastien on their own and we also work in a group but I am not only there for them. I also work with the MX2 riders. I also still love riding whether it be on a motocross track or out in the desert or on the beach."

With the season just starting, however, Georges' job is really just beginning. "It will be part of my job to be around the track, watching our guys and the opposition, looking for lines and possibilities. And we are already getting to know each other in training.

"This week I was working with Tyla for position on the bike. I gave him advice, he listened to me and tried out my suggestions and came back in and said it was perfect. It could have been possible for him to reject the advice but the more options you have the better you will be in the end. No-one is ever going to be 100 per cent perfect but when someone is 98 per cent and gets that one extra per cent he is even closer to winning.

"But the riders are adults and are responsible for themselves, I just have to help them optimise their talent. In the end it is always down to the individual riders to decide what advice they wish to take and which to ignore – they must have the feeling for what is best – but they must have as much information as possible available on which to base their decisions.

"Both Sebastien and Mickael are two-time world champions and I won five titles

but all of us can always learn and the final decision is down to each rider individually – even Stefan with his nine titles can still learn from others.

"Sebastien and Mickael are very different characters. Sebastien is very open and is very calm while Mickael can be more emotional and wants everything straight away. He doesn't want to test for 100 days but it is not that he is lazy – he simply wants to find the solution quickly. And then he is easy. Mickael has a reputation for being difficult to work with but it is not true – he knows what he wants and he wants it quickly. It is a normal reaction of a racer because they want to be able to focus on racing and winning, not on development.

"Sebastien is much quieter and can spend days, weeks testing different things but at the end of the day each of them has to come to the line with himself and the bike ready to go and to win.

"I also help them with their physical condition. One example. When Mickael goes out training he always gives 100 per cent but that is not always good. If you empty your battery before you even go to the start then your performance is going to suffer. This is not a problem for Sebastien but he has some what, for the lack of a better phrase, I will call bad habits in his physical build-up and they are probably the reason why he got hurt. I think we have found out why.

"I think it was down to the setting of the bike. He was running too low on the back – since we changed that he is more balanced on the bike and he also gets better traction. That is my opinion anyway. Perhaps it's wrong but I think that was the reason.

"Every rider is different with different riding styles, different ways of living, different ways of practising and I have to relate to each of them individually to help them develop their personal strengths and combat any weaknesses. I also got each of the riders to go to the university in Belgium for fitness tests because the results can help to show us where their weaknesses might be.

"I try to give my best to help each of them in a different way and the same goes for the engineers and mechanics too. Perhaps in the end each item is not major but lots of little things help us get closer to our goals.

"But I think perhaps the biggest single thing I can give to them is still to come as the season reaches its climax and one or more of them are in contention for the title. There is more to winning a championship than being the fastest rider. There are days when you need to be quiet with someone and just leave him to himself, there are other days when he needs to talk and I have to have a feeling for that. I will need to tell one guy to wake up, another to calm down.

"You know I won five world titles – and I think I deserved five world titles – but I didn't always win when I was the fastest. In the early years I lost world titles through silly mistakes when I was the fastest but I won my last two titles because I was the smartest, not because I was the fastest. There is more to winning than twisting the throttle and I hope I can help the KTM guys realise their ambitions."



+ red areas on footshelt denote different densities

The Tech 10 unique design takes the heavy stitching and added layer construction of the traditional motocross boot and replaces it with a one-piece, four-density, engineered low-profile bottom. Rider benefits: Dedicated protection over the different areas of the foot with differentiated flexibility - reduced dimension all around the foot, reduced weight and superior durability.



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